

MONTROYA BAHRAIN GP INJURY SCARE

WHY **CROCKED** SHOULDER COULD GIVE DE LA ROSA GOLDEN RACE CHANCE WITH McLAREN

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FERRARI

GAMBLES ON FIGHTBACK

CHAMPS RISK NEW
CAR **IN BAHRAIN**

TODT: 'NOW IS THE
TIME TO ATTACK'

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GLORY IN WORLD
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RALLYING
» HAS CITROEN
LOST ITS GRIP
ON THE WRC?

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» ULTIMATE BANK
HOLIDAY ACTION
ROUND-UP



haymarket

THINKING OF THE GREATER GOOD



THE current bickering over testing, including Ferrari's offer to skip pre-British GP mileage at Silverstone, is further proof that Formula 1 is becoming dangerously self-obsessed and ignoring its fan base.

Ferrari's gesture might appear noble, but at its heart is just continued self-interest – the goal of breaking up the agreement between all the other teams so it is no longer a solitary loose cannon outside of the framework. The 'band of nine' should stand firm on their agreement and stay united until Ferrari enters the fold and a more sensible accord can be reached.

As a starting point, we'd suggest hacking a week or two off the 30-day limit and turning grand prix Fridays into test days instead, with free access for spectators. It could save a few bob and would mark an important step towards F1 finally giving something back to the fans.

● It's not often we single out one journalist in these pages, but this week we're making an exception. Gordon Kirby has been a familiar name in Autosport for more than 30 years as our American Editor, but he stands down this week to focus on his burgeoning television and publishing work. 'GK' will no doubt keep an eye on our new Champ Car correspondent David Malsher as the series continues to recover this year – in the meantime, we thank him, wish him well and hope that you'll enjoy reading his sign-off feature on p64.

JOHN McILROY
EDITOR



THIS WEEK

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MINARDI'S 20th!

Looking back at the perennial minnows' 20 years of tears, cheers and survival in F1



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CITROEN IN CRISIS

The WRC champion team is down but not out. Here's how it plans to fight back this season



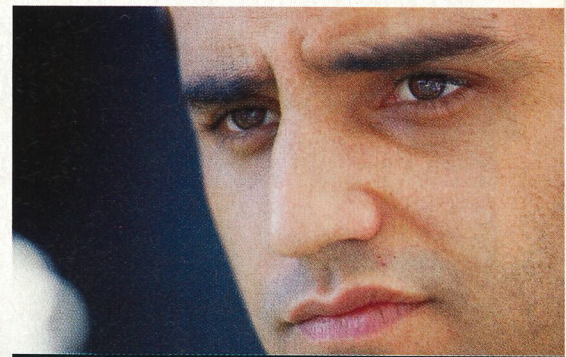


"IT'S GREAT TWO BRITS HAVE A CHANCE TO WIN RACES AT THIS LEVEL. A FEW YEARS AGO THAT WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED UNLESS YOUR NAME ENDED IN AN 'I'"

ANDY PRIAULX

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In an effort to claw back lost ground to Renault and the other Michelin teams Ferrari has pushed forward the F2005's debut, p6

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GET YOUR MOTOR RUNNING

Michael Schumacher tests the F2005 that will make its race debut at this weekend's Bahrain GP. Ferrari and Bridgestone are pinning their hopes on the new car ■ SEE MAIN STORY FOR MORE >>

NEW BRIDGESTONE TO FRESH FERRARI



FERRARI'S HOPES of redressing its dismal start to the season are pinned on the new Bridgestone tyres developed specifically for the F2005, which will make its race debut at the Bahrain Grand Prix.

Bridgestone has been under pressure to improve its performance after a terrible Malaysian GP, in which Ferrari could salvage only a seventh place for Michael Schumacher. Schumacher and team-mate Rubens Barrichello, driving Ferrari's interim F2004M chassis, complained of poor traction, grip and braking performance. Schumacher's tyres were severely worn by the end of the race.

Bridgestone admitted its tyres were inadequate and post-Sepang ramped up its development programme to produce better rubber for this weekend's race. The new tyres are tailored specifically to the F2005, which has itself been purpose-built to suit the new long-life tyre regulations. In tests at the Mugello circuit in Italy last week, both Ferrari and Bridgestone noted immediate performance improvements.

Bridgestone technical manager Hisao Suganuma said: "The test was very good. The more running we do with the new car, the more we learn."

Autosport understands, however, that the medium and hard compound tyres that will be used in Bahrain are still far from definitive. Bridgestone is planning to use the three-week break between Bahrain and Imola to produce something closer to a final-specification tyre that will form the basis of its products throughout the European Formula 1 races.

Bridgestone's ability to develop tyres to meet 2005's long-life regulations has been limited by the nature of its relationship with Ferrari. As the supplier to only one top team, it has completed barely one-seventh of the winter testing mileage that Michelin has run with its clutch of leading teams: BAR, Williams, Renault, McLaren and Toyota.

The design compromises of the F2004M, including its inability to maximise the performance of its long-life tyres, have been addressed in the new car. The F2005 has an all-new gearbox, around which the rear aerodynamics have been sculpted, to incorporate a more efficient diffuser and a mini-wing on top of the rear crash structure (see illustration). It also has a bespoke braking system developed exclusively for Ferrari by Brembo, a two-race engine that fits only this monocoque and a more rear-biased weight distribution,

intended to aid traction and prolong tyre life.

Team chief Jean Todt said the F2005 would enable Ferrari to mount an "all-out attack" on the championship.

He said: "After two defensive races we are ready to go on the attack. The gearbox, engine transmission and brakes are all strong points of this car. Mugello confirmed its potential."

The F2005, designed by Aldo Costa, is the first F1 Ferrari penned by an Italian since Mauro Forghieri's 126C4 of 1984 and has been hailed as the team's best-ever car by technical director Ross Brawn. It was originally scheduled to race at round five, the Spanish GP, but increased competition from rivals, in particular Renault which has dominated the first two races of 2005, has forced Ferrari to bring forward its debut.

McLaren CEO Martin Whitmarsh said: "The first two races showed the rate of progress that has been made by some teams. Ferrari found they were unable to stand still with an updated version of last year's very successful car."

He warned that the competition in F1 was so intense Ferrari would not find it easy to run at the front, even with the F2005.

"A superficial analysis of the F2005 would lead you to suppose that a big chunk of its success would depend on its

ES KEY I ATTACK

**"AFTER TWO
DEFENSIVE
RACES WE
ARE READY
TO GO ON
THE ATTACK"**

**JEAN
TODT**



tyres. I don't think Bridgestone will get it as wrong for a second race running, but so far Michelin has done a better job."

Ferrari has estimated the F2005 to be between 0.5 and one second faster than its predecessor. At the first back-to-back tests of the two chassis, at Jerez on March 10, test driver Luca Badoer lapped in 1m18.116s in the F2005, while fellow tester Marc Gené set a 1m18.349s in the F2004 M.

Schumacher, who drove the new car for the first time at Mugello last week, said: "It's important to immediately get a good feeling for a new car, and I can say that this is the case with the F2005. The car does not only feel fast, it is fast."

But his brother Ralf Schumacher believed Ferrari and Bridgestone were doing too little, too late. He said: "After the results of the F2004M, they had to act, but I cannot see Ferrari winning the title. Renault is more than just a tough opponent."

The hastened debut of the F2005 will put Ferrari under pressure to achieve the levels of reliability it has become used to in recent seasons. Brawn has admitted that none of the car's long runs in testing have been trouble-free. ☐

BRAWN ON FIXING FERRARI

P32 →

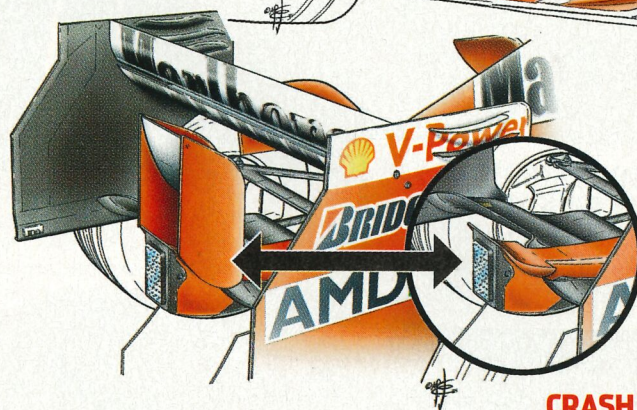
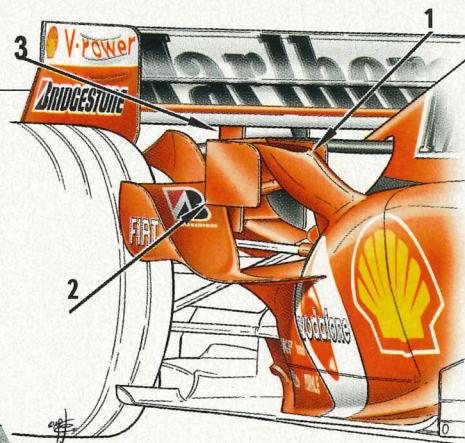
TECHNICAL ANALYSIS

GIORGIO PIOLA GETS UNDER THE SKIN OF FERRARI'S NEW F2005

Autosport NEW DATA

REAR AERO

1 Asymmetrical right-hand chimney; open exit improves cooling. 2 Mini-wing, designed to gain maximum benefit from cleaner rear airflow. 3 Crash box wing (see illustration below). F2005 gearbox is extra narrow to help improve efficiency of diffuser



CRASH BOX WING

Ferrari and Williams have both built these mini-wings mounted on top of the rear crash structure. They are designed to regain downforce lost under the 2005 aerodynamic regulations

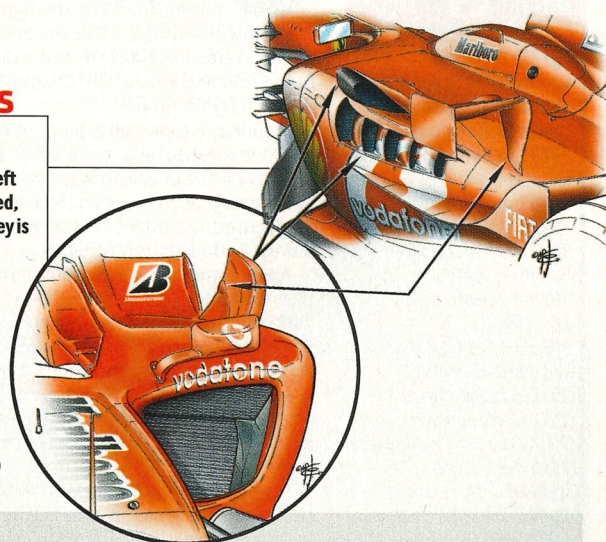
MINI-WINGS

F2005 has four airbox mini-wings—two more than the F2004M. Ferrari, like all teams, has sought an aerodynamic advantage from every area of the bodywork. Airbox winglets have to increase downforce without disturbing airflow to the all-important rear wing



CHIMNEYS

F2005 has asymmetrical chimneys; the left chimney is closed, the right chimney is open. Both are significantly smaller than those on the F2004M. The exhaust exit position has been changed on the F2005 (not illustrated)



FACT: SINCE 2001 MONTOYA HAS DRIVEN IN 70 CONSECUTIVE GRANDS PRIX, WINNING FOUR OF THEM

Montoya suffered a hairline fracture to his right shoulder while playing tennis at home in Spain

INJURED MONTOYA MAY NOT BE FIT FOR IMOLA

DE LA ROSA CV

Age 34
 Born Barcelona, Spain
 1983 & '87 European radio-controlled off-road car champion
 1989 Spanish Formula Fiat Uno Champion
 1990 Spanish Formula Ford 1600 champion
 1992 British and European Formula Renault champion
 1995 All-Japan Formula 3 champion
 1997 Formula Nippon and All-Japan GT champion
 1998 F1 test driver for Jordan
 1999 F1 with Arrows; one point
 2000 F1 with Arrows; two points
 2001 F1 with Jaguar (part-season); three points
 2002 F1 with Jaguar; zero points
 2003-2005 McLaren test driver

JUANPABLO Montoya faces a race to be fit to drive in the San Marino Grand Prix on April 24 after suffering a hairline fracture to his right shoulder. Montoya will miss the Bahrain Grand Prix this weekend after electing to fly to the United States to seek medical advice from Champ Car series doctor Terry Trammell.

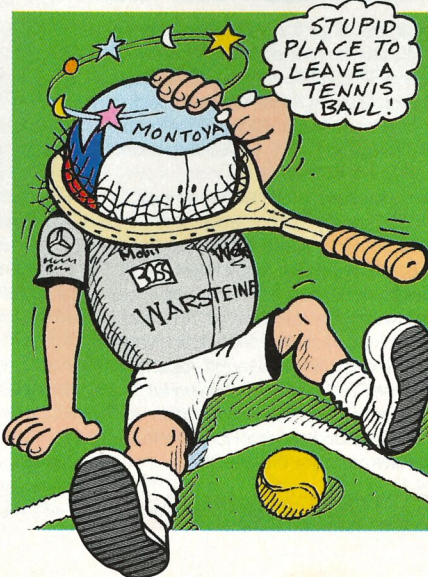
The injury is expected to take between three and four weeks to heal, during which time Montoya will be unable to follow his usual fitness training regime. Since joining McLaren he has focused far harder on his personal fitness, losing 6kg during the off-season.

Any prolonged absence would be a serious blow to Montoya's hopes of fighting for the 2005 world championship. After his high-profile switch to McLaren from Williams, Montoya started the season as one of the title favourites. But McLaren's first two races have been blighted by a series of incidents, preventing the team from showing its true level of competitiveness.

Montoya and team-mate Kimi Räikkönen have also locked horns in a fierce, though so far friendly, rivalry to establish supremacy

within the team (see right).

Montoya sustained the injury last Saturday after a fall while playing tennis with trainer Gerry Convey at his Spanish home near



Madrid, according to official sources.

Initial fears that Montoya had broken an arm were denied by the team, but concerns over tissue damage around the shoulder, also suffered in the accident, prompted Montoya to seek further medical advice, said sources close to the Colombian.

One said Montoya wanted a second opinion about the precise nature of his injury and felt most confident in the advice he would receive from Trammell. Montoya raced in Champ Cars in 1999 and 2000, winning the title in '99 to become the series' youngest champion.

In Montoya's absence Spaniard Pedro de la Rosa will be elevated from McLaren's third driver role to race in Bahrain. De la Rosa has tested the MP4-20 extensively since its January launch and was the team's nominated Friday and reserve driver at the Australian and Malaysian GPs.

He has not started a grand prix since the 2002 Japanese GP, where he drove for Jaguar Racing. De la Rosa's promotion comes at the expense of Alex Wurz, McLaren's reserve driver since 2001 (see above right).

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WHITMARSH: WINS WILL COME SOON

McLAREN CEO Martin Whitmarsh believes a win is "just around the corner" for the team, despite its disappointing opening two races of 2005.

McLaren started the year as joint title favourite with Renault and Ferrari, but the team's MP4-20 chassis has so far been unable to show its full potential. Freak qualifying conditions at the Australian Grand Prix were compounded by errors from both drivers on race day. In Malaysia a tyre deflation for Kimi Räikkönen and poor set-up choices for Juan Pablo Montoya prevented either from scoring well.

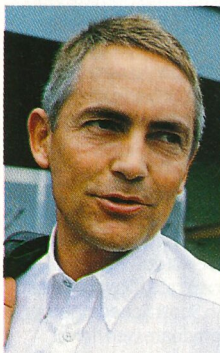
But Whitmarsh (below) is confident that despite the shoulder injury to Montoya earlier this week, the team is poised to return to regular front-running performances.

He said: "We thought that our car could win the first two races and I think we can win Bahrain. That level of expectation will carry on throughout the season; that's the reality of the situation."

Whitmarsh pointed to the fastest race lap set by Räikkönen at the Malaysian Grand Prix as evidence of the MP4-20's strength in high-speed corners—a strong indicator of a car's pace and aerodynamic efficiency.

"Renault may have won the first two races but there's no way this is going to be a Renault-dominated championship," he said. "The level of competition is too strong for that."

Whitmarsh hinted, however, that some concerns remain over the power output of the Mercedes V10 engine. "We have too much drag for the power we have," he said. "In race conditions a car has to have enough top speed to be able to pass another car."



McLAREN AIMS BIG FOR WURZ THIRD CAR

McLAREN IS working flat out on adjustments to its MP4-20 that will allow Austrian Alex Wurz to run as its Friday tester at this weekend's Bahrain Grand Prix.

McLaren's decision to design its MP4-20 chassis around shorter race drivers Juan Pablo Montoya and Kimi Räikkönen has meant the lanky Wurz has not yet driven the new car. The team was therefore obliged to call up Pedro de la Rosa, who has carried out the team's Friday testing in the first two races of 2005, to substitute for the injured Montoya at Bahrain (see left).

Wurz, 31, has been McLaren's test and reserve driver since 2001 and is the team's nominated stand-in should one of its race drivers be unable to compete. The loss of a

potential race start is another disappointment to Wurz, who had hoped that with McLaren running a third car in Friday practice this year,

he would be able to show his credentials as a potential race driver.

The modifications to the MP4-20 had not been scheduled for completion until the San Marino Grand Prix on April 24 at the earliest.

But in the wake of Montoya's shoulder injury the team worked over Easter Monday in a bid to ready the car for Wurz and capitalise on the advantage that running the extra Friday testing miles offers.

Wurz last raced in Formula 1 for Benetton during a troubled 2000 season in which he scored only two points.



Wurz



On track McLaren's drivers are pushing to the limit and sometimes beyond

TEAM-MATES 'ARE PUSHING TOO HARD'

McLAREN HAS admitted the competition between its drivers may be preventing the team from reaching its maximum potential.

CEO Martin Whitmarsh said Kimi Räikkönen and Juan Pablo Montoya had overdriven at times during the Australian and Malaysian grands prix in an effort to beat each other.

"There's inevitably pressure between the two of them, because a driver's major aim is to beat his team-mate," he said. "In that environment a driver ends up overdriving and that's something that has been openly discussed in the team."

"On balance you tend to find that two attacking drivers are the ones that get the most out of the car as long as you build it to their style."

The two have yet to race wheel-to-wheel at McLaren, but Räikkönen said beating Montoya was an explicit goal. "You have to be quicker than your team-mate," he said, "because he is the only one equipped with the same machinery

as you, the only one with the real comparison to you."

"I want to be the quickest and beat my team-mate, but the same goes with all the others too. My target is to win the championship. That means I have to beat everybody. I have to be in front of the whole field."

Räikkönen said he did not expect the rivalry with Montoya to go beyond the track.

"I don't expect there will be bitter fights between us when we climb out from the cockpit. We will, of course, fight to the limit when we race, but that is normal. We have been doing that since we started in Formula 1. Sometimes in F1 team-mates have a mental fight where they stab each other in the back through the media, but that is not my thing."

Mercedes boss Norbert Haug said he believed the competition between his two stars was healthy for the team.

"It would be more of a worry if they refused to go for it," he said.

HONDA CLAIMS ENGINE GAINS

HONDA IS confident it has fixed the engine problems that put Jenson Button and Anthony Davidson out of the Malaysian Grand Prix.

Both BAR drivers retired after just two laps, when identical oil pressure sensor failures caused their engines to lose all their oil. The team tested extensively at Paul Ricard in France last week to rectify the problem. Anthony Davidson completed 167 laps and test driver Enrique Bernoldi did 176 without any engine unreliability.

Otmar Szafnauer, vice-president of Honda Racing Developments, said: "We

have some improvements in fuel economy with the latest-specification engine which will be useful for planning race strategy. We're looking forward to Bahrain."

We were very competitive there last season."

Takuma Sato, who was forced to miss the Malaysian GP because of a virus, has been passed fit to race in Bahrain.

Davidson ran 167 trouble-free laps at Paul Ricard last week



MAXPPP

FERRARI OFFERS SILVERSTONE CARROT TO SPLIT GANG OF NINE

THE ONGOING Formula 1 testing dispute is certain to escalate at this week's Bahrain Grand Prix after a calculated offer by Ferrari to cancel a pre-British GP test at Silverstone.

Ferrari had booked the track for an exclusive test from June 21-24, but now says it will cancel if other teams do not join it. Any of Ferrari's nine rivals doing so would be in breach of a voluntary agreement between

them not to test at a circuit within 30 days of a race to be held at the same venue.

A Ferrari source said: "If the other teams don't want to do it, then we won't. Our etiquette is not to gain an unfair advantage and we will therefore not go to circuits that the others do not want to go to."

Ferrari's rivals will view its offer as an attempt to split their alliance on testing and deflect

criticism away from Ferrari's pursuit of its own test schedule with no consideration for the restraint being urged by the 'gang of nine'.

Those teams have agreed informally to limit their testing to a maximum of 30 days this season. Ferrari argues that by reducing its test mileage and cutting staffing at tests, it has done more to reduce costs than the other teams.

TEAMS IN BRAKE FEAR FOR BAHRAIN

FORMULA 1 TEAMS are making special preparations on their cars' braking systems ahead of this weekend's Bahrain Grand Prix.

The Sakhir circuit is one of the toughest on brakes. Drivers have to slow from 190mph into first or second-gear corners three times each lap, making the track as tough as notorious brake-killer Montréal.

High ambient temperatures and the unique additional hazard of sand blowing into delicate mechanical components present further technical challenges.

Renault chassis engineer Rod Nelson said: "Sakhir is extreme on brakes. The usage level is not a problem in itself, but the layout of the track between turns 4 and 13 means that the brakes never really have time to cool down

properly. That can lead to oxidation and much higher wear rates."

He said drivers would be adjusting their car's brake bias throughout the race to manage wear.

Giancarlo Fisichella said: "Getting good braking performance is a major focus for the engineers. And it's a real challenge for the drivers, too."

Bahrain preview p44 →



Jarno Trulli's discs glow under braking at Sakhir last year

ETHERINGTON/LAT

DC: JACQUES COULD WALK FROM F1

DAVID COULTHARD has fuelled speculation that his close friend Jacques Villeneuve may be on the verge of quitting F1.

Coulthard, who joined Villeneuve in Switzerland for his 34th birthday celebrations last week, believes the 1997 world champion will quickly become frustrated if he does not improve his current level of performance.

He told Scotland's *Daily Record* newspaper: "Jacques is having a difficult time so far this season. Two races in and already the media are questioning if he will keep his seat. That cannot help."

"I know he is capable of great things but unless we see a marked improvement by Imola it wouldn't surprise me to see him walk away or be encouraged to do so."

Villeneuve slid from fourth to 13th at the Australian Grand Prix and spun out after making a mistake under braking in Malaysia. He heads to Bahrain this weekend having never driven at the Sakhir circuit.

SAUBER: THIRD MAN 'MUST PAY'

SAUBER IS close to running a third car this season – but only if it can find a third driver with £2.5 million to bring to the team.

Boss Peter Sauber has admitted a third car would greatly help the team set up its disappointing C24 chassis at races.

Ex-Jordan third driver Timo Glock, who is on the verge of a Champ Car drive, has been in talks with Sauber about the role, and former Minardi driver Nicolas Kiesa recently visited the team to discuss the potential vacancy. Glock is said to be trying to convince his backer Deutsche Post to fund a third car.

Peter Sauber said: "We would need an additional five million dollars and right now, we simply cannot afford a third car. The driver would also have to be experienced and quick to provide valuable data."

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RED BULL RACING

RED BULL YOUNG GUNS 'ON OFFER' TO SAUBER



RED BULL RACING has admitted it would be willing to farm out one of its young gun pairing, Christian Klien and Vitantonio Liuzzi, to rival Formula 1 team Sauber as a potential replacement for under-fire former world champion Jacques Villeneuve.

Red Bull owner Dietrich Mateschitz claims either could be in line for a drive at Sauber, the team the energy drink giant supported for a decade in F1.

He said: "Of course Klien or Liuzzi could move to Sauber – although I do not wish to start ideas which might prove irrelevant. Villeneuve could suddenly regain his old form, so we'll wait and see. But the possibility exists. I would definitely consider it."

Villeneuve's poor form in Australia and Malaysia has called into doubt his position with the Swiss

team, despite assertions by boss Peter Sauber that questions over his future "were not the point".

Both RBR drivers, each a product of the Red Bull driver academy, were given identical contracts at the start of this year: a one-year deal allowing the team to switch them between racing and testing roles. The team took this unusual route to allow it flexibility over its race driver line-up in the event that the highly-rated Liuzzi, currently third driver, proved faster than Klien, who was given the race seat for the first three grands prix.

But Klien's strong showings in the opening two rounds, where he scored points for finishing in seventh (Australia) and eighth place (Malaysia), have made the team reluctant to push him back to a test role. He is unable to run as RBR's third driver, on account of his having competed in more than

six grands prix in the past two years.

Mateschitz's right-hand man Helmut Marko, who runs the Red Bull driver academy, is keen to give Liuzzi, last year's International Formula 3000 champion, a race drive. Mateschitz admitted he could make his F1 race debut for RBR at the San Marino GP on April 24.

"It's theoretically possible, particularly as the race is on Italian soil," he said. "We told Klien he would race for the first three events; it is only fair to give Liuzzi the same chance."

Mateschitz added the team had a duty to find an outlet for the talent it had nurtured. He said: "We do not see this as Klien or Liuzzi, we see a density of talent and it is up to us to hone that talent or lend it to other teams. And this we will do."

Any vacant third driver role at RBR would most likely be filled by American Scott Speed, another Red Bull driver academy graduate (see right).



Mateschitz



ECCLESTONE MAKES PEACE WITH BANKS

BERNIE ECCLESTONE'S long-running legal dispute with the banks which own a majority share of Formula 1 has been settled out of court.

The agreement has averted a High Court trial, scheduled for May, against Ecclestone and his family trust, Bambino Holdings. The case was over control of Formula One Administration (FOA), one of the companies which runs F1. The banks are now believed to have the influence they desired, having gained a 75 per cent stake in SLEC Holdings, the company which owns F1's media rights. The remaining shares are held by Ecclestone.

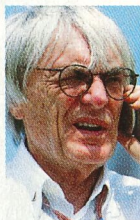
Despite the banks' majority shareholding, most of the important decisions in F1 (such as signing Ferrari to a new Concorde Agreement in January) had been taken by companies owned by SLEC, but controlled by Bambino (Ecclestone). The banks' legal action was brought to shift the balance of power in their favour.

After last week's settlement, a BayernLB (one of the three banks involved) statement said: "Mr Ecclestone and Bambino Holdings have demonstrated prudence in backing down on all of the points under legal dispute."

It said Ecclestone's move had

enabled the banks' company, Speed Investments, "to regain influence commensurate to its ownership". Ecclestone added: "I expect no further legal steps by the banks."

The settlement means the banks and Bambino can now focus on protecting their investment in the sport by attempting to head off the burgeoning 'rival F1' series that has been proposed by the car manufacturers.



Ecclestone

But Xander Heijnen, spokesman for the manufacturers' organisation previously known as GPWC (Grand Prix World Championship), said that the settlement "doesn't change our strategy". Renault, BMW and Mercedes are behind the organisation, with Honda and Toyota due to join the still-unnamed 'manufacturer alliance' by the end of April.

Ecclestone has suggested that GPWC buys the banks' shares, claiming it would be "a cheaper and more effective transaction than setting up a rival series". This is not thought likely to happen.

Ecclestone's position is unlikely to change, however, since the banks want him to stay as chief executive. It is nevertheless possible that Ecclestone might not be part of the post-2007 F1 landscape if the banks sell their stake. Any new management group might try to run the sport independently of Ecclestone.

PIT AND PADDOCK...

MICHELIN MAN JOINS TOYOTA

Toyota has landed a technical coup by luring Pascal Vasselon, formerly Michelin head of F1 tyre development, to work in the team's R&D department. Vasselon left Michelin last year after being transferred away from the F1 programme, but was determined to return to the sport. His new role could help Toyota gain a key advantage in making efficient use of its long-life Michelin tyres.

WEBBO'S A BEAUT

Williams ace Mark Webber has been voted one of the world's most beautiful people by Australia's *Who* magazine. Webber qualified 13th out of 25 on a list that this year includes celebrities Cate Blanchett, Jude Law and Kate Winslet.

RENAULT'S GHOSN HOPES

Outgoing Renault chairman Louis Schweitzer is optimistic that the F1 team's dominant start to the season will help persuade his successor, Carlos Ghosn, of the programme's merits. Ghosn, famed within the car industry for salvaging the fortunes of Renault-owned Nissan, is noted for his scepticism as to the merits of F1 for promoting road cars. But Schweitzer told French radio: "My successor thinks like me: if one wins in Formula 1, it is necessary to remain there."

THE JOKE'S ON SCHU

Michael Schumacher's poor start to the season has drawn ridicule from the German press. Germany's biggest-circulation tabloid, *Bild*, transposed his head onto a snail, while *Bild* rival *BZ* christened him "Schlappmacher", which roughly translates as a driver prone to breakdowns.

SAUBER'S DOUBLE CENTURY

Sauber will mark its 200th grand prix in Bahrain with no points on the board — only the fourth time in the team's 13-year F1 history it has reached the third race with no score. Driver Felipe Massa said: "We have to aim to score points this weekend. We have new aerodynamic parts coming for Bahrain, and I am optimistic our performance will improve."

ADELAIDE AIMS FOR F1 RETURN

Formula 1 is being tipped for a return to Australia's Adelaide street circuit. The hugely popular city event was the F1 season-closer between 1985 and '95 (pictured below). Next year's Australian Grand Prix is almost certain to lose its traditional mid-March season-opening slot, owing to a clash with the Commonwealth Games, which are being held in Melbourne from March 15-26. It is thought unlikely an Adelaide GP could take its place, with less than a year to organise the event. The circuit could, however, be used as a venue for a round of a manufacturer-led 'rival F1' from 2008. Australian GP promoter Ron Walker, who created the Melbourne event, is strongly aligned with Bernie Ecclestone.



SPEED QUICK IN F1 TEST

AMERICAN FORMULA 1 hopeful Scott Speed staked his claim for a third driver role with Red Bull Racing after an impressive test for the team at Barcelona.

Speed (above), who will drive for the iSport team in GP2 this year, set a best time of 1m16.122s in 68 laps over two days at the Circuit de Catalunya, Barcelona. He shared the car with fellow Red Bull-backed GP2 driver Neel Jani (pictured in car) who set a best time of 1m18.037s.

Speed said: "My first impression was 'Wow! I trained real hard for this and I really enjoyed myself.'"

RBR may need to find a new third driver (see main story).

AERO BOSSES SUPPORT DOWNFORCE REDUCTION

LEADING Formula 1 technical directors have backed calls for a dramatic cut in cars' downforce to promote overtaking and more spectacular racing.

Responding to suggestions from FIA president Max Mosley that F1 cars should have downforce reduced to only 10 per cent of current levels — placing more emphasis on cars' mechanical grip rather than aerodynamic performance — Ferrari technical director Ross Brawn said: "There's some very clear evidence that when a large percentage of grip is provided by aerodynamics, then by definition it's very difficult for two cars to follow each other and overtake."

"There are a lot of good reasons why higher tyre grip

and low downforce could provide better racing."

Toyota's Mike Gascoyne said: "There's general agreement among the experts that changing the ratio between aerodynamic grip and mechanical grip could be beneficial for the sport."

But Renault's Pat Symonds warned that cultural inertia among teams and the huge investment in windtunnels would conspire against making F1 a non-aerodynamics-led formula.

Williams's Sam Michael said: "Such a big cut would take us down to touring car levels. Making that kind of change would need a lot of looking into. My initial reaction is that it's going too far."

The complexity of changing

aerodynamic regulations has been highlighted with this season's attempt to cut 25 per cent of cars' downforce. All top teams have regained the downforce lost to the regulations, but drivers have noted the new cars make it more difficult than ever to follow a car ahead, and pass.

BAR's Geoff Willis said: "It's very easy to jump in and say 'We're going to make a rule change, this is going to help overtaking'. As we've seen already this year it looks as if it's much harder to follow cars closely with the new aero regulations."

Under the terms of the Concorde Agreement teams have to agree a complete set of F1 regulations by December 31 this year, to run from 2008.



UNDER THE SKIN

Neel Jani enjoyed his test with Red Bull Racing so much that he decided to get into the car

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Japanese GTs began a new era at Aida last weekend — the series is now to be known as Super GT as it tries to become more international. Best of luck!



WAIT UNTIL THE RACES...

Gianluca De Lorenzi gets his 2005 World Touring Car programme off to a great start by stuffing his BMW during testing



"THIS IS A TIME WHEN FERRARI DESPERATELY NEEDS TESTING MILES"

> MARK HUGHES ON THE RED MACHINE p31

SEBRING NEEDS A SPRING CLEAN

No, it's not some post-apocalyptic wasteland. It's post-12 Hours Sebring. Messy animals, American endurance fans

"THE HEAD GASKET DID NOT LIKE DOING TWO RALLIES"

► WRC KING SEBASTIEN LOEB ON CITROEN'S AVERAGE START TO THE 2005 SEASON p46

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"I go in and go to the bathroom and all of a sudden this girl walks in. I'm like, 'Whoa! What are you doing in here?' And she says, 'You're in the girls' bathroom...'"

NASCAR star Carl Edwards recalls a prank played on him by a pupil during his earlier career—as a substitute schoolteacher

"I was looking at it from an Air Miles point of view. With all those flights I'm going to have a great holiday at the end of the year"

James Thompson reveals a nice perk of stepping up from British to World Touring Cars

"It's a real nuisance. It was only the first night I had the car. They probably think they can sell the wheels and make some money but they probably can't"

Bernie Ecclestone laments the theft of the wheels from his brand new Mercedes. How on earth did they get it off the ground?

"I've told Jean-Pierre [Nicolas] that the championship starts here"

Marcus Grönholm is pumped up for Rally New Zealand already. Let's hope his Peugeot 307 WRC is similarly up to the task

"It would be simply super if Fisichella could beat Michael to the title. An Italian beating Ferrari!"

Bernie again—nailing his colours to the mast

"It would be good to have another Brit in Formula 1 and he is an able, fast racing driver. But if you were to ask me if he is the next Schumacher... then I would say no, he's not"

Free-speaking David Coulthard on BAR tester Anthony Davidson



GOT YOUR CLEAN UNDIES ON, SON?

Don't you just hate it? You're Paul Tracy, it's pre-season Champ Car testing at Sebring and then your mum turns up to check on your progress

BEIJING CHAMP CAR RACE SET

CHAMP CAR co-owner Kevin Kalkhoven believes that a deal to stage a race in Beijing next year could lead to Chinese-run teams taking part in the series.

Champ Car signed an agreement with the state-approved motorsport body in Beijing last week, which should lead to a race in May or September of 2006, most likely at a revised version of the 1.5-mile Goldenport Motor Park road course.

"We are excited because it is about more than just a race," said Kalkhoven. "This could lead to even bigger things in the future, including the potential to bring Chinese drivers and teams in."

But Champ Car's executive vice-president Joe Chmelich said the series would maintain its US roots: "The balance this year is just right, with 50 per cent of the races in the USA."

UNOFFICIAL TIMES

1 Timo Glock	50.96s
2 Jimmy Vasser	51.09s
3 Sébastien Bourdais	51.17s
4 Alex Tagliani	51.18s
5 Cristiano da Matta	51.22s
6 Andrew Ranger	51.30s



ALL PICS LAT

**Verstappen shone in his first
Champ Car run with HVM**



Official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km): Ford Fiesta ST (17" alloys): Urban 27.2 (10.4); extra urban 49.6 (5.7); combined 38.2 (7.4). The official CO₂ emission is 179g/km.



Wirdheim is closing in on a drive with Dale Coyne Racing



Ex-F1 racer Glock topped the timesheets for Rocketsports

GLOCK STAKES CLAIM AT ROCKETSPTS

FORMER JORDAN grand prix driver Timo Glock moved closer to a Champ Car race seat with Rocketsports after he outpaced series champions Jimmy Vasser and Sébastien Bourdais in a two-day test at Sebring last week.

Glock lapped in 50.96 seconds, a tenth of a second clear of Vasser (PKV), Bourdais (Newman/Haas) and recent Walker Racing signing Alex Tagliani, before going off due to suspension failure

The German remains a key player in the driver market, along with fellow ex-F1 racer Jos Verstappen, who tested for the HVM squad and set the third quickest time on day one of the test. Verstappen was joined at HVM by Denmark's Ronnie Bremer, and team co-owner Keith Wiggins said: "I'd love to have either one in the team."

Mario Domínguez, whose position at HVM is under threat, has been linked to a switch to Forsythe with backing from Corona, which sponsored Rodolfo

Lavín last year. Lavín tested for Forsythe last week, but was only 14th fastest. Domínguez drove for HVM on the second day as did Roberto González, who is also in the frame for a race seat.

Former Jaguar F1 tester Björn Wirdheim drove for Dale Coyne Racing, alongside 2004 driver Oriol Servia.

Wirdheim said: "I just need mileage in the car. It doesn't matter which team I'm driving for. Just being here is the important thing; the alternative was a ride with Minardi or Jordan in F1."

CHAMP CAR LINE-UP

FORSYTHE CHAMPIONSHIP RACING

Paul Tracy
Rodolfo Lavín, Mario Domínguez, Oriol Servia

DALE COYNE RACING

Oriol Servia, Björn Wirdheim

JENSEN MOTORSPORTS

Michael Valiente

MI-JACK CONQUEST RACING

Andrew Ranger

Nelson Philippe

NEWMAN/HAAAS RACING

Sébastien Bourdais

Bruno Junqueira

PKV RACING

Cristiano da Matta

Jimmy Vasser

HVM RACING

Rodolfo Lavín, Mario Domínguez,

Jos Verstappen, Roberto González,

Ronnie Bremer

ROCKETSPTS RACING

Ryan Hunter-Reay

Timo Glock

RUSPORT

Justin Wilson

AJ Allmendinger

WALKER RACING

Alex Tagliani

Marcus Marshall

Bold = confirmed

Others are all potential drivers for the available seats

Introducing the rally-bred Fiesta Sports Series – the Fiesta Zetec S, Zetec S TDCi and the powerful Fiesta ST. All equipped with a lower, modified sports suspension. And packed with ruthless precision, quick responses and rock solid handling as standard. Gripping stuff. For more information, visit ford.co.uk or call 08457 111 888; for a brochure/nearest dealer text FiestaST to 84118.

Loves corners. New **Fiesta ST**



KANE SET FOR BRIT F3 LOLA

LOLA WILL have a second car on the British Formula 3 grid after Steven Kane agreed a late deal to run with Promatecme.

The 24-year-old, who raced in Spanish F3 last year, joins P1 Motorsport's Danilo Dirani as the only drivers using a Lola chassis in the series.

Kane said: "Danilo seems to be doing a really good job in testing and Lola really wants to win. I'm not expecting much at the start, but if I can win after a few races I'll be happy."

The Northern Irishman returns to the British championship for the first time since losing the National Class title to Ernesto Viso at the final round of the 2003 season.



MASTERS HITS THE STREETS

Ex-Formula 1 star René Arnoux officially launched the Grand Prix Masters series with a demonstration run through the streets of Durban, South Africa, last week in a Zytek chassis similar to the car that will race in the series. Arnoux was joined at the event by former world champions Alan Jones and Emerson Fittipaldi. GP Masters kicks off at Kyalami on November 13

GP2 TEST CHANCE FOR JOUANNY

BRITISH Formula 3 race winner Bruce Jouanny has been handed a chance to stake his claim for the final GP2 seat at Super Nova.

The Frenchman, 26, will test for the team at the final pre-season get-together at Paul Ricard starting on April 5. If Jouanny goes well, he could become the 24th and final driver to find a place in the Formula 1 support series.

Super Nova boss David Sears said: "We'll probably test Bruce alongside Giorgio Pantano at Ricard. I would have loved to have run Adam Carroll, but it looks as though his sponsor isn't going to be able to come up with the necessary budget."

TOCCACELO LANDS WORLD SERIES DRIVE

INTERNATIONAL Formula 3000 runner-up Enrico Toccacelo is stepping down to the Renault World Series after failing to land a drive in the new GP2 championship.

The Italian has signed to race for the Victory Engineering team in the new series, which has been created by the merger of the Nissan World Series and Formula Renault V6 Eurocup. Toccacelo had been in talks with Super Nova over its vacant GP2 seat, but a lack of a suitable budget meant he had to take up his option at Victory, a front-running outfit from the Eurocup.

"I wanted to do GP2 this year, but it was not easy to find the money," he said. "There were talks with Racing Engineering late last year and then with Super Nova. Victory first approached me two months ago and I think this is the best option for me. The new car looks really

good. I saw it in action at Vallelunga and it is about three seconds faster than an F3000 car. I think it will be a strong championship."

Toccacelo will be partnered by Czech Tomáš Kostka, who competed in a handful of Nissan World Series races for RC Motorsport in 2004. Victory had sounded out Adam Carroll for the second seat, but could not hold on for his GP2 situation to be finalised (see left).

Victory team manager Giorgio Picolo said: "Enrico is a very good driver and, with Adam, we would have had a very strong team."



Toccacelo

FACT: TOCCACELO TOOK THREE WINS FROM 36 FORMULA 3000 STARTS

IRL BLOCKING FEARS EASED FOR ST PETE

THE INDY Racing League's unique road course qualifying system, which makes its debut in the first ever IndyCar Series street race at St Petersburg this weekend, should eradicate the practice of drivers blocking their rivals, according to Team Penske principal Tim Cindric.

Drivers will first take part in single-lap qualifying, and the fastest six will then

participate in a 10-minute open session to determine the first three rows.

"They're going to release the cars at 10-second intervals, so the officiating ought to have a solid stance if that goes on," said Cindric.

Cheever Racing boss Eddie Cheever added: "Some idiot will try blocking and he or she will be dragged into the [IRL's] trailer."

DRIVER SHOOTOUT FOR PAN-AM IS POSTPONED

THE SHOOTOUT designed to decide who will take the vacant Team Aka drive in the inaugural Pan American Formula Renault V6 championship has been postponed.

Formula 3 veteran Danny Watts, former McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner Alex Lloyd and Dutchman Paul Meijer were selected for the showdown at Homestead in Florida this week after coming through an initial

audition at Silverstone earlier in the year. But the series organisers called off the test after a poor response to the planned Formula Renault 2000 pilot event that was due to share the circuit.

Team Aka boss Andrew Kirkaldy said: "It's a bit annoying for me because all my staff are out there. It's been a costly exercise. But we have said we're going to do this and we will. We'll follow what the organisers decide."

PIT AND PADDOCK...

HEARN SIGNS WITH SCHMIDT
Richie Hearn, 34, will contest the Indianapolis 500 with Sam Schmidt Motorsports in its Chevrolet-powered Panoz chassis. Schmidt said: "We have the funding to be on the track all month and we'll work hard to qualify and race competitively."

BUCKNUM MAKES THE GRADE
Sports car driver Jeff Bucknum passed his Indy Racing League rookie test at Phoenix last week, ahead of his IndyCar debut at Motegi next month and his drive in May's Indianapolis 500. He said: "It felt great to get up to speed."

SIMMONS FLIES AT INDY
Jeff Simmons led the inaugural Infiniti Pro Series road course test at Indianapolis last week by over a second ahead of Chris Festa and Marco Andretti, the 18-year-old son of IndyCar team owner Michael.

CONWAY LEADS BRIT F3 TEST...
Mike Conway topped the times in the final British Formula 3 test before the season-opener. The Fortec Motorsport Dallara-Opel driver was three-tenths faster than Bruno Senna (Double R Racing Dallara-Mugen) and teammate James Walker at Croft. Danilo Dirani (P1 Motorsport) was fourth in his Lola-Mugen.

...HAMILTON TOPS EURO PACK
Briton Lewis Hamilton (below) set the pace in official Formula 3 Euroseries testing at Spa-Francorchamps last week. The ASM star topped the times ahead of Team Midland Euroseries's Esteban Guerrieri and Manor Motorsport driver Paul di Resta.



LETHON



Team Halfords (middle) showed off its new Honda at Donington as Collard (above) drove WSR's MG

COLLARD LANDS WSR DEAL

FORMER BRITISH Touring Car Championship Independents' Trophy winner Rob Collard has landed a dream drive with ex-works MG outfit WSR.

Collard, 36, has been seeking a factory drive since clinching the Independents' title in 2003, and although WSR has not been officially works backed for two seasons, its four-cylinder ZSs were regular race winners with Anthony Reid and Colin

Turkington last year as they claimed victory in the Independents' teams and drivers categories.

Collard said: "It's really great to be driving for such a professional team as WSR. My first priority is to regain the Independents' Trophy, but I'll also be driving a car that gives me the opportunity of winning races outright."

WSR has not tested this winter, due to a lack of funding, and Collard was due to have his first run in

the car at the BTCC media day at Donington Park on Tuesday.

WSR boss Dick Bennetts said: "We are delighted to have secured Rob's services because we believe that in the right environment he's a winner. At present, we don't have enough sponsorship to do the complete championship, but we're confident that between us we'll generate sufficient funds for the entire season."

BTCC ENTRY

TEAM HALFORDS
(HONDA INTEGRA)
Matt Neal
Dan Eaves

VX RACING
(VAUXHALL ASTRA SPORT HATCH)
Yvan Muller
Colin Turkington
Gavin Smith
SEAT SPORT UK (TOLEDO CUPRA*)
Jason Plato
James Pickford
Luke Hines

SYNCHRO MOTORSPORT
(HONDA CIVIC TYPE-R)
James Kaye
WSR (MG ZS)
Robert Collard
TBA
HPI RACING (LEXUS IS200*)
Richard Williams
Ian Curley

FAST-TEC MOTORSPORT
(VAUXHALL ASTRA COUPE)
Mark Proctor
GAMOTORSPORTS
(ALFA ROMEO 156*)
Gavin Pyppe or Stefan Hodgetts
TEAM FIRSTSERVE GROUP
(HONDA CIVIC TYPE-R*)
John Batchelor

ARENA MOTORSPORTS
(HONDA CIVIC TYPE-R)
Tom Chilton
Alan Morrison

Bold confirmed
Others are all potential drivers for the available seats
* Super 2000-spec car

BTCC SHOWS ITS HAND

THE 2005 British Touring Car Championship was launched at Donington Park this week with just 12 of the promised 18 cars present.

There are three works entries each from SEAT and Vauxhall, but the rest will run as Independents.

The most hotly tipped of these are the Team Dynamics Hondas, which were unveiled in their new Halfords livery, while the Speed Equipe Lexus IS200 made its public debut.

FORD TO RACE FOCUS IN SALOON GUISE

FORD WILL experiment with a four-door saloon version of its Focus during its inaugural World Touring Car Championship campaign this year.

The manufacturer will start what it is billing as a learning season with a five-door hatchback developed by Hotfiel Sport. The German team will also build a saloon version, which would then most likely be fielded as an additional entry later in the year.

Ford of Germany motorsport boss Eberhard Braun said: "It is 100 per cent certain that we will race a saloon."

Braun said that the saloon shape had aero advantages.

ALFA FASTEST IN MONZA TEST

ALFA ROMEO topped the times in the first World Touring Car Championship test attended by all five manufacturers competing in this year's series.

Brazilian Augusto Farfus was fastest on each of the two days of testing at Monza last week. His Autodelta 156 S2000 was the only car to dip under the 1m59s barrier.

Farfus, 21, set a fastest time of 1m58.783s, three-tenths of a second ahead of team-mate Gabriele Tarquini. Third fastest, a further three-tenths behind, was Schnitzer BMW driver Dirk Müller.

Farfus said: "I feel confident because we clocked good times using the race set-up. We worked well over the two days."

BMW driver Jörg Müller reckoned that the Alfa team used its acknowledged straight-line speed advantage to good effect at the Italian circuit.

"They were hardly using the kerbs, and yet they were still much faster than us," he said. "They could drive away from us on the straights."

MONZA TIMES

1 A Farfus	Alfa	1m58.783s
2 G Tarquini	Alfa	1m59.492s
3 D Müller	BMW	1m59.335s
4 J Müller	BMW	1m59.525s
5 J Thompson	Alfa	1m59.681s
6 F Giovanardi	Alfa	1m59.707s
7 A Garcia	BMW	1m59.807s
8 R Colciago	Honda	1m59.841s



Chevrolet has admitted there is a lot of work to do on the Lacetti

CHEVYS STRUGGLE FOR PACE

CHEVROLET HAS admitted that it has taken a conservative start to its inaugural World Touring Car Championship campaign.

The manufacturer made the claim after its three RML-built and run Lacetis ended up more than four seconds off the pace during testing at Monza last week.

Chevrolet Europe motorsport manager Eric Neve said: "For a new manufacturer coming in against some very experienced competitors there is no point in doing anything but take a very conservative start. We are where we expected to be."

The Chevrolet's lack of power was shown up at Monza. Five different specification of engines were used over the test.

CHINA'S WTCC ENTRY SET FOR SPA

THE CHINESE Brilliance entry into the World Touring Car Championship could come on stream for the final five races of 2005.

The organisers of the series have said that the process to homologate the M1 China model has begun and that negotiations with a partner to design and build the car (Menard Engineering) were at an advanced stage.

The organisers are expecting a commitment from the team's project leader, John Batchelor, to join the series as early as Spa at the end of July.

ZYTEK TO BUILD NEW PROTOTYPE

ZYTEK ENGINEERING has outlined its plans to build a new car to the latest prototype rulebook.

Zytek boss Bill Gibson, who set up a chassis division alongside his renowned engine business in 2003, has revealed he wants to be on the grid for next year's Le Mans 24 Hours with an all-new car. It would follow on from the 2004 Zytek O4S, which is an evolution of the Reynard-designed LMP675 contender that raced as both an IRM and a DBA.

Gibson said: "My aim is for Zytek to win Le Mans and if we want to do that we have to build a new car [because the O4S is not eligible in 2006]. We are looking at both an LMP1 and an LMP2, but we are tending towards the bigger car because I'm not interested in class wins."

Evaluation of a new design has already started, according to Gibson.

"We have a mountain of data on the present car and have begun working on the design," he said. "We're obviously not starting from

"MY AIM IS FOR ZYTEK TO WIN LE MANS AND IF WE WANT TO DO THAT WE HAVE TO BUILD A NEW CAR"

BILL GIBSON, ZYTEK BOSS

scratch, because we have a very strong engine and gearbox package that we can carry over."

Gibson admitted that the failure to win a Le Mans entry for this year was a set-back to the project.

"This was a thunderbolt that will throw us back," he explained, "but it doesn't change our ambitions."

Zytek's chassis arm, which is run by former Jordan F1 team manager Trevor Foster, licensed the design to build a pair of O4S prototypes. Its other projects are the MG ZT 260 DTM racer and the Grand Prix Masters single-seater.



Zytek tested its O4S at Donington last week but the team has been denied a Le Mans entry

BRITISH TEAMS LOSE OUT ON LE MANS SLOTS



THE BRITISH Lister and Zytek prototype squads have lost out in the race for Le Mans 24 Hours entries.

The two teams were the most high-profile omissions when the final list for the race on June 18/19 was published last week. Another 16, plus eight reserves, were added to the first wave of entries confirmed in February.

Lister boss Laurence Pearce maintained he was "disappointed but not bitter" to miss out on what would have been a third consecutive Le Mans entry with his Storm LMP.

"This isn't a blow to our programme. We'll now look at doing some ALMS races instead," he said. "All I'd like to know is why we didn't get an entry."

Zytek Engineering boss Bill Gibson, whose team had entered the lightweight O4S prototype qualified third by David Brabham last year, said: "The Le Mans organiser is entitled to make its own decisions. It's a shame for the British fans who were looking forward to seeing us take on Audi."

Another British loser was Team LNT, which had entered a pair of TVR T400R GT2 racers for a line-up of drivers including ex-British Formula 3

champions Jonny Kane and Marc Hynes. Its omission came in spite of participation in this month's Sebring 12 Hours — entry into which normally guarantees a Le Mans slot.

LNT technical director Alan Mugglestone said: "We're disappointed to be turned down after putting in the effort to make TVR competitive."

Others to miss out are Jan Lammers' Racing for Holland squad, which failed to gain a second entry. Its number two Dome-Judd S101 is among the reserves, as is the French Larbre team's second Ferrari 550 Maranello.

LE MANS ENTRY

LMP1

Champion Racing Audi
Champion Racing Audi
Team ORECA Audi
Dome Dome-Mugen
Creation DBA-Judd
Rollcentre Dallara-Nissan

Team Jota Zytek
Racing for Holland Dome-Judd
Courage Competition Courage-Judd
Courage Competition Courage-Judd
Nasamax Nasamax
Pescarolo Sport Pescarolo-Judd
Pescarolo Sport Pescarolo-Judd
Rollcentre Dallara-Judd
LMP2
PiR Pilbeam-JPX
Welter Racing WR-Peugeot
Welter Racing WR-Peugeot
RML Lola-MG
Kruze Motorsport Courage-Judd

Del Bello Racing Courage-Mecachrome
Intersport Racing Lola-AER
Intersport Racing Courage-Judd
Miracle Motorsport Courage-AER
G-Force Racing Courage-Judd
Paul Belmondo Courage-AER
Paul Belmondo Courage-AER
Chamberlain-Synergy Lola-AER
Lucchini Engineering Lucchini-Judd
GT1
Larbre Competition Ferrari 550
Scuderia Italia Ferrari 550
Scuderia Italia Ferrari 550
ACEMCO Saleen S7R

Aston Martin Aston Martin DBR9
Aston Martin Aston Martin DBR9
Cirtek Motorsport Ferrari 550
Corvette Racing Chevrolet Corvette
Corvette Racing Chevrolet Corvette
JMB Racing Ferrari 575
GT2
Alex Job Racing Porsche 911
Luc Alphand Porsche 911
Panoz Panoz Esperante
Panoz Panoz Esperante
Flying Lizard Porsche 911
Seikel Motorsport Porsche 911
Spyker Squadron Spyker C8

Sebah Automotive Porsche 911
White Lightning Porsche 911
Cirtek Motorsport Ferrari 360
Scuderia Ecosse Ferrari 360
Racesport TVR T400R
RESERVES
T2M Motorsport Porsche 911
Larbre Compétition Ferrari 550
Racing for Holland Dome-Judd
GPC Squadra Corse Ferrari 360
Raymond Narac Porsche 911
Graham Nash Saleen S7R
Spyker Squadron Spyker C8
Perspective Porsche 911



MAGNUSSEN LINED UP FOR LISTER LMES PROGRAMME

SPORTSCAR STAR Jan Magnussen looks certain to team up with Lister in the Le Mans Endurance Series this season.

The ex-Formula 1 driver has been asked to race the British squad's Chevrolet-powered Storm LMP in the five LMES races by team owner Laurence Pearce and new signing Jens Moller, a former team-mate of Magnussen's in Danish touring cars. The move has already been given a tentative all-clear by

Chevrolet, for whom Magnussen races a Corvette GT1 in the American Le Mans Series.

Pearce explained that Moller, who raced the Storm LMP at Le Mans last year, has committed to the full LMES after a successful test at Snetterton earlier in the month.

"We both know Jan, so he was the obvious choice of team-mate," said Pearce. "He's a lovely guy and a great driver and he really wants to get in my car."

Magnussen said: "It's not completely finalised yet, but there shouldn't be any problem because I'll have a Chevrolet engine behind me. We're just working out the details. It will be great to get back in a prototype. I really miss driving that type of car."

Magnussen, who is also expected to race the Pontiac GTO.R Grand-Am GT racer this year, should make his Lister debut at Spa on April 19.

MASERATI LIMITED BY FIA AFTER TEST

THE PERFORMANCE of the controversial Maserati MC12 has been pegged back ahead of the opening round of the 2005 FIA GT Championship in April.

The Maserati supercar, five of which are scheduled to take part in the event, will have to carry 10kg of ballast and run a rear wing reduced in width by 100mm. The penalties were imposed after the car came out on top in the official pre-race test at Monza last week.

Michael Bartels emerged fastest in the best of the Vitaphone Racing Maseratis, 0.6sec ahead of Christophe Bouchut in the Cirket-run Russian age Ferrari 550 Maranello. Fabio Babini, in the second

Vitaphone MC12, was a further 0.1sec behind.

Bartels, who has put together Vitaphone's FIA GT campaign with the MC12, expressed surprise at the move.

"We always knew we could be penalised but we never expected something like this before the first race."

"The weight is not a big issue, but the smaller rear wing is going to make a big difference under braking and in the corners."

Bartels expressed surprise that the FIA imposed the penalties even though some of Maserati's strongest

opposition was not present. The Konrad Saleen squad, which took three FIA wins last year, missed the test.

Fourth and fifth quickest was Tomáš Enge in the Menx Ferrari 550 and Jaime Melo in Ferrari's 575GTC test hack.

MONZA TIMES

1 M Bartels Maserati	1m44.596s
2 C Bouchut Ferrari	1m45.187s
3 F Babini Maserati	1m45.288s
4 T Enge Ferrari	1m45.316s
5 J Melo Ferrari	1m45.700s
6 N Simon Lamborghini	1m46.884s



TWO-HOUR FORMAT KEY TO CREATION OF WORLD GT SERIES

A NEW, two-hour race format for the FIA GT Championship will be given a trial run when the series visits Istanbul in September.

The revised race distance, a reduction from the regular three-hour length, is being introduced at the Turkish event with a view to attracting more manufacturer participation in the series in the future. The move is part of FIA GT boss Stéphane Ratel's plan to

create a manufacturer-led World GT Championship over the next couple of years.

Ratel said: "This will offer more exciting racing and a format suitable for TV. We will experience it and see for the future."

An abandonment of the three-hour format, introduced at the inception of the FIA GT series in 1997, would "depend on the manufacturers," Ratel added. "Are

they ready to get more behind the championship, to help us move overseas for more events?"

Ratel, who is looking for four manufacturers to sign up to his idea, suggested that interest from event promoters outside Europe would mean there would be no problem turning FIA GTs "into a real world championship with only a few races in Europe" in 2006 or 2007.

PIT AND PADDOCK...

CREW CHIEFS SPARED BANS

The appeals board of NASCAR amended the penalties of the two Hendrick Motorsports crew chiefs whose cars swept first and second place at the recent Las Vegas Nextel Cup NASCAR event. Instead of two-race suspensions, Chad Knaus and Alan Gustafson were given a 90-day probation. The fines of 25 points for drivers Jimmie Johnson and Kyle Busch are unchanged.

BRITS GANG UP FOR DTM PUSH

Mercedes has paired its British youngsters Gary Paffett and Jamie Green for this year's DTM teams' championship. Newcomer Mika Häkkinen pairs with Bernd Schneider, while Jean Alesi joins forces with the 2004 Persson-run car of Bruno Spengler. Audi has paired champion Mattias Ekström with Martin Tomczyk, while Allan McNish joins Tom Kristensen.

REID SETS HEART ON MG SEAT

British Touring Car star Anthony Reid has pinned his hopes on landing an MG drive in the DTM after giving up on his chances of staying with the WSR BTCC squad. Reid said: "I've got a race-winning history with MG and I've put a good case to them concerning the DTM."

KTR OPTS FOR VAN LAGEN

KTR has confirmed Dutch Formula Renault graduate Jaap van Lagen as its second Renault World Series driver. The 2002 Dutch Formula Ford champion joins Tristan Gommendy for the series that kicks off on May 1 at Zolder, Belgium.

GRAVES JOINS VILLAGE PEOPLE

JVA boss John Village has confirmed that Formula 3 veteran Tor Graves will drive one of his 1999-spec Formula 3000 cars in this year's 3000 ProSeries EuroCup—the championship that has been created by the demise of Euro3000. Meanwhile, ADM Motorsport will run Stefano Attianese alongside fellow Italian Fausto Ipotti in the series.

ATLANTIC ATTACK FOR DYSON

American Le Mans Series racer Chris Dyson will contest selected Toyota Atlantic races this year with his family-run team. Meanwhile, Brazilian Fernando Rees and US Formula BMW champion Andreas Wirth have signed for Brooks Associates Racing for the full series, and British female racer Katherine Legge, 24, has joined the Polestar Racing Group with the backing of Champ Car squad PKV Racing.

KIDD GETS TROFEO CAMPAIGN

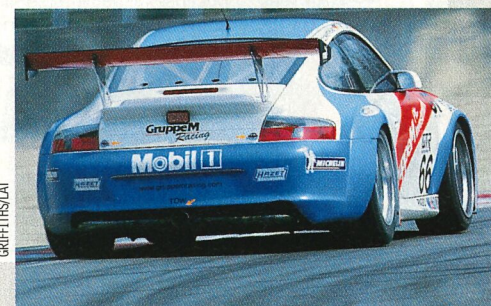
Supermodel Jodie Kidd will contest the full Maserati Trofeo one-make series this year. Kidd, who took part in two races last season, will share driving duties with a number of star names, including former Ferrari grand prix driver Ivan Capelli and racer-turned-TV presenter Tiff Needell.

EX-F1 RACERS JOIN FORCES

Former grand prix drivers Andrea Chiesa and Loris Kessel will race a 2005-spec Ferrari 575GTC in this year's Italian GT Championship.

GT SQUAD SHOWS COLOURS

Porsche's factory representative in the FIA GT Championship, GruppeM Racing, unveiled its new livery (below) at the official pre-season test at Monza last week. The two GruppeM Porsche 911 GT3-RSR machines topped the GT2 times over the course of the two days.



AUSTRIANS LAND RED BULL MC12

KARL Wendlinger and Philipp Peter will race a pair of Red Bull-sponsored Maseratis with JMB Racing in the FIA GT Championship.

The Austrians, who both have long-term deals with the energy drink manufacturer, had been expected to come together in one team this season. Peter is swapping over from GPC Squadra Corse to join Wendlinger, who won an FIA GT race with JMB last year, although they will not be paired together.

The definitive line-up at JMB, which was due to take delivery of its Maserati MC12s this week, has yet to be decided. Maserati works driver Andrea Bertolini has been placed with the team, while the announcement of the final driver is imminent, according to the team.

For all the latest news log on to www.autosport.com

SARRAZIN RETHINKS HIS ATTACK

SUBARU DRIVER Stéphane Sarrazin is making some fundamental changes to his pace-note system in order to up his pace in the World Rally Championship.

The Frenchman struggled to match the speed shown by Subaru team-mates Petter Solberg and Chris Atkinson the last time the three went head-to-head in Sweden, but is confident that he can reverse the situation.

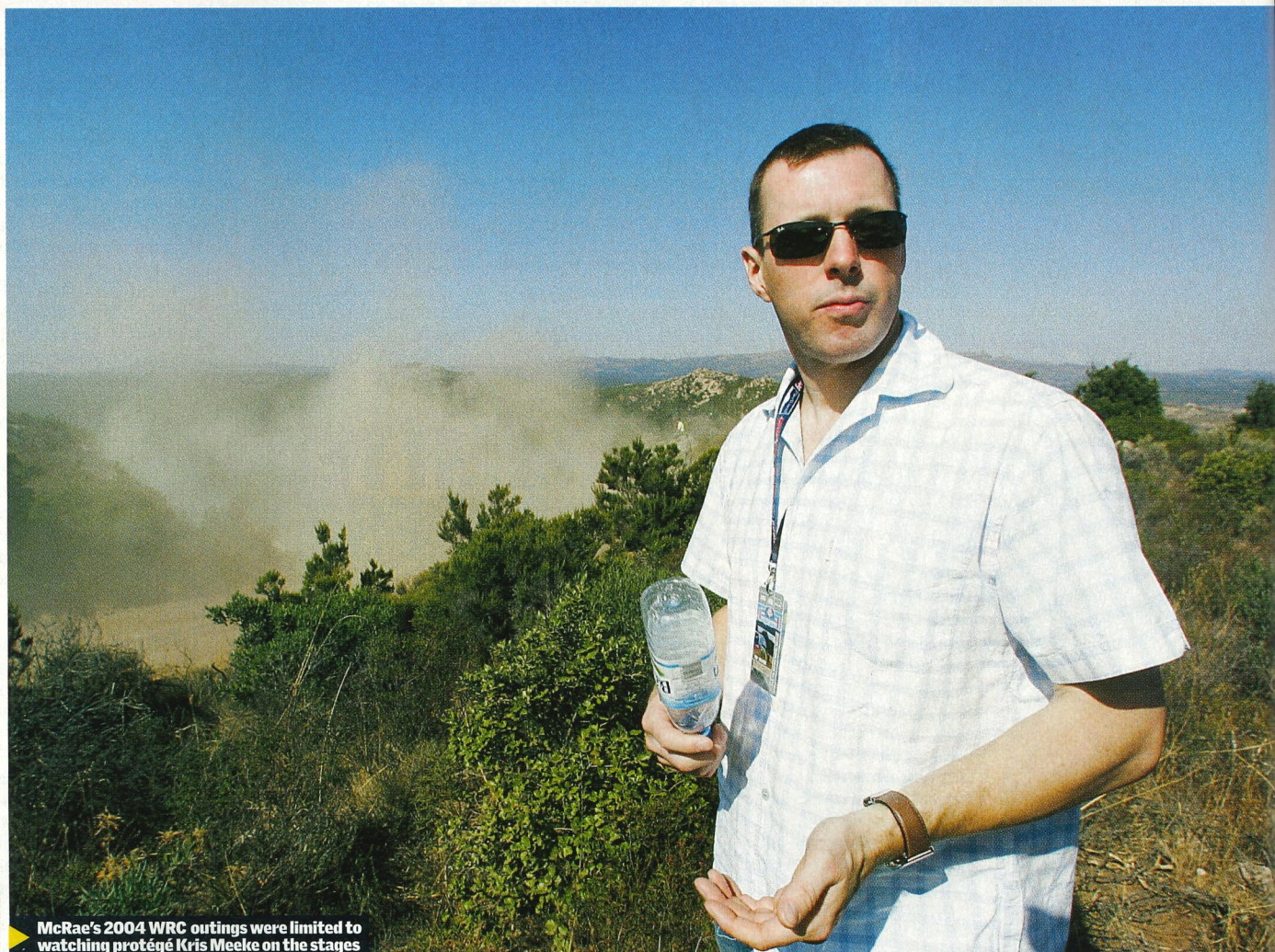
Sarrazin said: "My pace notes related to the angle of steering input needed for the corner. Now they are much more like Petter's, using numbers and a description of the road. Before, my notes were trying to make every stage too much like asphalt. That doesn't work on gravel."

Sarrazin and vastly experienced co-driver Denis Giraudet, who guided Juha Kankkunen and Didier Auriol to WRC success, spent two days practising the notes before the recce for Rally Mexico.

"It felt a lot better when we made the notes for Mexico," Sarrazin said. "It works for both of us. Denis has less to say and I get more information. We will see how it goes in Sardinia for Rally d'Italia but I'm sure it will help my speed on gravel."

Sarrazin denies the speed shown by Subaru new boy Atkinson in Sweden and Mexico has put him under additional pressure to perform.

"He is a fast driver," said Sarrazin. "But there's no pressure. It's normal. I have had quick team-mates in the past so I'm used to that. I have never competed on gravel before, so I have to learn about that, but I'm still aiming to fight at the top."



McRae's 2004 WRC outings were limited to watching protégé Kris Meeke on the stages

RALLY GB ORGANISERS TRY TO LURE McRAE

THE ORGANISERS of Rally Great Britain are aiming to piece together a deal for former world champion Colin McRae to return to the sport's top flight in Wales this September.

The organisers pinpointed the lack of a leading British driver as one of the main reasons for the decline in spectator numbers on last year's event. In an effort to reverse last season's downturn, Andrew Coe, the event's commercial boss, said he was prepared to do all he could to ensure Britain's first world champion would drive in front of his home crowd this season.

Coe said: "There are certainly things we can do to help make it easier for Colin to get in a car. There's a strong will to make this happen, because we need personalities like Colin McRae and it needs to come sooner rather than later."

But Coe dismissed suggestions that Rally GB's commercial arm could bankroll McRae's entry itself. He said: "It wouldn't be possible for him to be backed by the event directly. We don't want to start paying appearance money – that could set a dangerous precedent, one we couldn't sustain."

McRae hasn't competed in the world championship since departing the Citroën team at the end of 2003, but the three-time winner of Rally GB admitted he remains keen to drive on his home event this season.

"Just from a fun point of view, I would like to come back and do it," said McRae. "At the same time, it would be quite interesting to see how quick I am. It would be coming up to two years that I've been out of a World Rally Car, so it wouldn't be that easy to jump straight back into

the car. But I don't think they [the current WRC drivers] are driving any faster than I did and the cars are probably only tenths of a second faster than when I was driving."

McRae admitted, however, that he would only return under the right circumstances.

"I'm not going to do it if it's going to cost me money," he said. "It's all very well the organisers saying they'll do what they can, but I can sort a drive out for myself – it's cash we need. I would like to think I could help bring a few more people in. I was shocked last year at just how few people were out there. Having said that, since there has been no British driver at the top, there seems to have been a downturn in interest in the WRC in general. I've got friends in Scotland – people who are involved in national rallying – who don't even watch the coverage on television any more."

RALLY AUSTRALIA LOOKS TO NEW HOST CITY

RALLY AUSTRALIA'S future in the World Rally Championship will become clearer in early May, when any potential successors to Perth as a host city will have registered their interest.

The final round of the series was rocked by the news that the Western Australian government intended to withdraw its backing for the event, leaving it in an untenable position beyond 2005.

The Confederation of Australian Motor Sports (CAMS, Australian motorsport's governing body) is currently gauging the level of interest in hosting the rally, with

Queensland appearing to be favourite. The FIA is confident that a successor to Perth will be found and Australia will be able to retain its place in the calendar.

"From what we hear there are

three strong possibilities," said an FIA insider. "They are likely to be on the east coast of the country, where 90 per cent of the population lives. It'll be a chance for the rally to grow even more."

MILLS UNSURE OF NZ ROUTE

FORMER WORLD champion co-driver Phil Mills says the organisers of Rally New Zealand should strive to find a more compact route for next season.

Next week's fourth round of the world championship is based in Paparoa, 100 miles north of Auckland, for legs one and two and in Raglan, 120 miles south, on the final leg. The rally effectively moves out of Auckland on Thursday evening, returning from the north on Saturday night.

"On the rally it's not too bad because we stay up in Paparoa," said Mills. "But the recce is bad. It's one of the hardest reccees we have to do. I understand New Zealand's problem—it's one of geography. This is what you get from a long, thin island, but at the same time, there must be some way of basing the whole event in one place."

WINTER'S DESERT STORM

ARLENE WINTER will become the first ever British driver to compete in Morocco's all-female Rally Aicha des Gazelles in April.

The 35-year-old retail manager from Bedford was chosen by the TOTAL UK team after a lengthy selection process, including a training weekend at a military base in Chaumont, France.

Winter has no previous driving experience, but she will be co-driven on the event by experienced Canadian Lyne Guerier.

Winter said: "This is a chance of a lifetime for me. It still hasn't sunk in that I'll be taking part in such an amazing challenge. I'm trying to get as fit as I can for the start, so I can give it my best shot."

The Rally des Gazelles, beginning on April 21, requires competitors to navigate their way across 2500km of desert and through several checkpoints using only a map and compass for navigation.

PEUGEOT STICKS TO UNLOVED SETTINGS

▶ **PEUGEOT WILL** retain its much-derided suspension system for round four of the World Rally Championship in New Zealand next week.

Both 307 WRC drivers Marcus Grönholm and Markko Märtin have complained about the lack of adjustment available on the car's set-up and while team principal Jean-Pierre Nicolas says he is willing to help the drivers, the system remains unchanged.

A team insider said: "Jean-Pierre is willing to do anything to help, but at the same time the engineers don't want to bin everything they have done with the current suspension. That's understandable, but we need adjustable shocks. They were okay for the old 206, but this is the 307. We need it changing, particularly for the rough rallies. It will be too much if the car is like this for the rough rallies."

Neither Grönholm nor Märtin

were willing to discuss the situation, but the Finn felt the car's set-up would not be a problem in New Zealand.

"It's smooth and fast," he said. "Last year we had no problems and I led, so we showed it works."

Peugeot tested the 307 WRC extensively last week. The team's test driver, Sebastian Lindholm, joined Märtin and Grönholm to complete set-up work for New Zealand and development work for Rally d'Italia in Sardinia.



Peugeot will persevere with its existing suspension system for Rally New Zealand

WWW.MAGKLEINDE

JORDAN: WRC FOR 2006

JORDAN IS ramping up its bid for World Rally Championship status in 2006 by making radical changes to bring its candidate event into line with the requirements of the FIA.

The Jordan Rally, which runs as a Middle East round from May 5-7, will be observed by the FIA this year and contested by an unprecedented 50 crews from the region. Among the changes are the introduction of a

ceremonial start (at the cost of a superspecial stage), the use of a central service park, remote tyre fitting zones and a limited recce.

"We have a lot of hard work ahead of us if we are to reach our goal, but we have the expertise and experience," said HRH Prince Feisal Al Hussein, who is personally involved in his country's bid for WRC status.

The Prince has already attended numerous WRC

rounds, but says he intends to visit further rallies this season in his attempt to find out more about what's required to run a round of the championship.

"We're not under any illusions that all we need is minor cosmetics to make the rally fit to WRC," said the Prince.

"There will be nothing haphazard about our approach. This is a chance to compliment what Bahrain has done in F1."

■ How did you get involved in motorsport?

The interest has been inherited from his majesty, my father. He helped to establish the RAC in Jordan and then competed in the 1960s. He was twice Jordanian national champion.

■ Have you ever competed?

Yes. I co-drove when I was younger and my brother (King Abdullah) used to drive. I have been involved in motorsport for 20 years, but now I am involved in the challenge of getting Jordan ready for inclusion in the 2006 World Rally Championship.

■ When was the idea of WRC first talked about?

It goes back to the early 1990s, when we thought, 'If we are the best run rally in the region and

WRC wants to come into the Middle East, we'll be the obvious choice.' The reality is that we want to become part of the WRC, but we've had a lot more work to do to raise the standards. There's no way you can go into WRC as amateurs, which is why we have professionals working full-time on the event for us.

■ Are you hands-on with the WRC project?

Yes. This weekend I am going down to the Dead Sea, where we have a national rally running. This is my background and you need to get dust on your shoes if you are going to find out what's going on. It's not true that all the best ideas come from the top—there's some brilliant ideas at the bottom. It raises morale for everybody to be involved.



NEWS IN BRIEF

▶ CARLSSON GETS 10

Daniel Carlsson's programme for the remainder of the season has been sorted. The Swedish driver will contest a further 10 rounds of the championship, eight of which are expected to be in a Subaru Impreza WRC, run by the British-based RED World Rally Team, while he will contest Cyprus and Argentina in a Bozian Racing Peugeot 206 WRC as part of his Peugeot contract. RED currently runs an Olsbergs-backed Impreza WRC for Tobias Johansson (below).



▶ VW AIMS TO RAID TUNISIA

Volkswagen is aiming to build on its maiden success with the Race-Touareg when the second round of the FIA Cross Country Rally World Cup starts in Tunisia on April 2. Bruno Saby, who won March's season-opening Rally Por las Pampas in South America, will spearhead VW's attack in north Africa. His main competition will come from a brace of Mitsubishi Pajeros for Luc Alphand and Hiroshi Masuoka and Jean-Louis Schlesser's new V8-engined Buggy. The 1864-mile event finishes on the holiday island of Djerba on April 11.

▶ CHAMPIONS FOR PORTUGAL

Former world champions Juha Kankkunen and Didier Auriol will be joined by Mikko Hirvonen on the Rally of Portugal, which starts tomorrow (Friday) and finishes on Saturday evening. All three will drive Group N Subaru Imprezas, while Carlos Sainz will pilot the course car—co-driven by former partner Luis Moya on the Algarve-based event.

▶ NEW SUZUKI FEELS SWIFT

Current Junior WRC championship leader Guy Wilks has pronounced testing of the new Suzuki Swift machine "a very good start". The replacement for the 2004 title-winning Ignis covered 100 kilometres of testing at MIRA in Britain last week before moving on to the south of France. Wilks will handle all testing duties for the time being while team mate Per-Gunnar Andersson recovers from post-Rally Mexico illness.

▶ BRC FANS: JOIN THE CLUB!

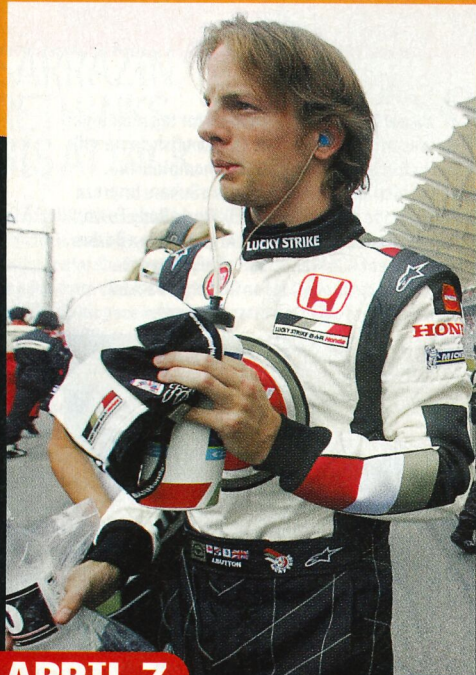
Fans of the British Rally Championship can now join a supporters' club to keep up to speed with series developments. Members will also receive a regular BRC magazine and introductory offer DVD. The joining fee is £35. For more information go to www.brcweb.co.uk.

▶ MARSHALING TO THE CAUSE

Organisers of this year's British Rally Championship will recognise the vital role played by marshals—without whom events could not run—by offering them a logbook to record their attendance and duties at events. The scheme is designed to encourage marshals to support more of the BRC's events and to reward them for their loyalty and commitment. Prizes will be awarded for the best attendance records.



DON'T MISS



APRIL 7

WILL JENSON'S DROUGHT CONTINUE IN THE DESERT?

Brit star heads to Bahrain eager to quench his thirst for points

PLUS

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ON TRACK ON SCREEN

RACING/EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL AND UK

SATURDAY APRIL 2

■ **Formula 1 World Championship Bahrain Grand Prix qualifying**

Rd 3/19
Sakhir, Bahrain
www.f1.com

■ **British F3 Championship**

Rd 1/11
Donington Park, Leicestershire
Ends Sunday
www.britishf3.com

■ **British GT Championship**

Rd 1/8
Donington Park, Leicestershire
Ends Sunday
www.britishGT.com

■ **Japanese Formula 3 Championship**

Rd 1/10
Motegi, Japan

■ **NATIONAL British F3/GT Meeting**

Donington Park, Leicestershire
Ends Sunday
British F3, British GT, Ginettas, John Cooper Challenge, UK Formula Ford, Caterham Challenge.
Admission £8/£18. Saturday practice 0930, racing 1545. Sunday practice 0900, racing 0920. Tel: 01332 810048.

■ **NATIONAL SEMSEC Meeting**

Brands Hatch Indy, Kent
Saloons, Saloon/Sports Championship, Open Single-Seaters, SELOC BMWs.
Admission £12. Practice: 1200, racing 1345. Tel: 0870 950 9000.

■ **NATIONAL 500 MRCI Meeting**

Kirkistown, Northern Ireland
Saloons, single-seaters, sportscars.
Practice 1000, racing 1330.
Tel: 028 427 713325.

SUNDAY APRIL 3

■ **Formula 1 World Championship Bahrain Grand Prix**

Rd 3/19
Sakhir, Bahrain
www.f1.com

■ **IRL IndyCar Series**

Rd 3/17
St Petersburg, Florida, USA
indyracing.com

■ **Infiniti Pro Series**

Rd 3/13
St Petersburg, Florida, USA

■ **Formula Nippon**

Rd 1/10
Motegi, Japan
www.f-nippon.co.jp/indexe.html



WHY NOT VISIT BRITISH F3/GT MEETING, DONINGTON PARK

DONINGTON PARK'S the place to be with the opening rounds of the British F3 and GT championships kicking off the national racing season in earnest. F3 is wide open this year, with an influx of new talent and teams set to upset the established order. Fortec Motorsport's Mike Conway is a title favourite after a winter testing programme that the word "intensive" doesn't do justice to. The likes of Tim Bridgman and Susie Stoddart also

have something to prove, while P1 Motorsport's Danilo Dirani stands out among the second-year drivers.

British GT is stronger than ever, with Andrew Kirkaldy/Nathan Kinch (Ferrari 360 GTC) among the favourites to start the season with a win. Support comes from the thriving John Cooper Challenge, the revitalised Caterham Challenge and the Ford-backed UK Formula Ford Championship.

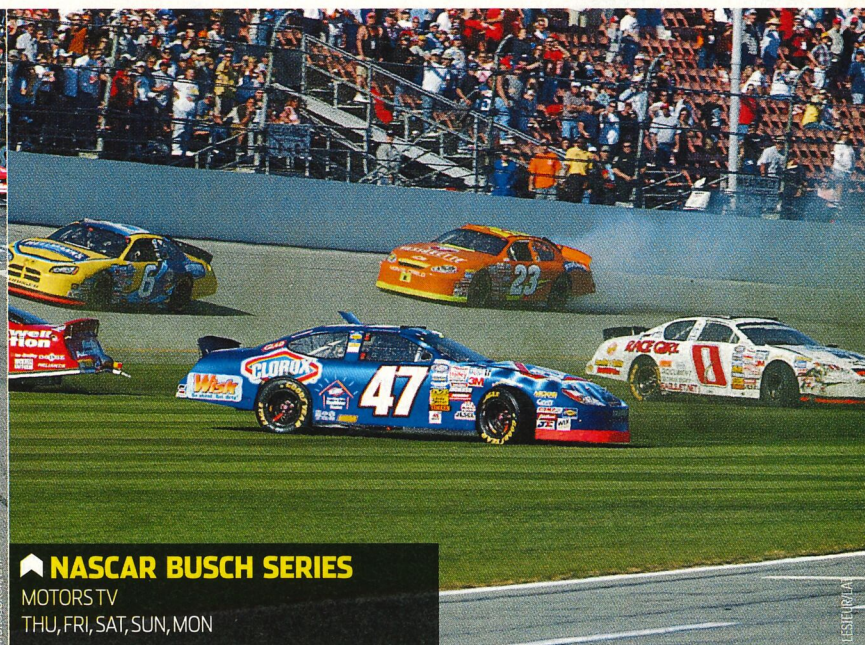
March 31-April 6

TV/RADIO

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS



▲ AUSSIE V8s
FIVE, MOTORSTV
THU



▲ NASCAR BUSCH SERIES
MOTORSTV
THU, FRI, SAT, SUN, MON

CHANNEL KEY: ■ E EUROSPORT GB ■ M MOTORSTV ■ NASN NORTH AMERICAN SPORTS NETWORK ■ SS1 SKY SPORTS 1 ■ SS2 SKY SPORTS 2 ■ SS3 SKY SPORTS 3 ■ SSX SKY SPORTS EXTRA

	THURSDAY MARCH 31	FRIDAY APRIL 1	SATURDAY APRIL 2	SUNDAY APRIL 3	MONDAY APRIL 4	TUESDAY APRIL 5	WEDNESDAY APRIL 6
Terrestrial and radio	0315-0405 Aussie V8s (Five)	0535-0600 Motorsport Mundial (Five)	1030-1215 Bahrain GP qualifying (ITV1) Also on BBC RADIO FIVE LIVE 909AM/693MW	1130-1430 Bahrain GP LIVE (ITV1) Highlights 1230-0115 Also on BBC RADIO FIVE LIVE 909AM/693MW			
Motors TV	1030-1130 Historic Rally (M) 1200-1500 Super GT (M) 1600-1800 Aussie V8s (M) 1930-2000 Inside Grand Prix (M) 2100-2300 NASCAR Busch Series (M)	1200-1300 Historic Rally (M) 1400-1500 NASCAR Busch Series (M) 2030-2100 Inside Grand Prix (M) 2100-2230 On the Limit (M)	1100-1130 Inside Grand Prix (M) 1600-1700 Super GT (M) 1800-1830 DTM (M) 2000-2230 NASCAR Busch Series (M) 2230-2300 Rally World (M)	1100-1300 DTM (M) 1300-1530 NASCAR Busch Series (M) 1800-2200 BTCC Preview (M)	0630-0900 NASCAR Busch Series (M) 1000-1030 Rally World (M) 1500-1530 DTM (M) 2030-2130 Super GT (M) 2300-0200 ALMS (M)		
Sky Sports		0130-0230 Race World (SS1) 1100-1200 Race World (SS2) 1300-1400 Race World (SSX) 1600-1700 Race World (SSX) 1830-1900 Moto+ (SSX) 2300-2330 Moto+ (SSX)	0100-0130 Moto+ (SSX) 0100-0200 Max Power (SS3) 0230-0300 Moto+ (SSX) 0330-0400 Moto+ (SS1) 0400-0500 Max Power (SS3) 0600-0700 Race World (SSX) 0630-0700 Moto+ (SS2)	0500-0600 Max Power (SS2) 0600-0630 Moto+ (SSX) 0630-0900 World Motor Sport (SSX) 1230-1300 Moto+ (SS3) 1300-1400 Max Power (SSX) 1730-1800 Moto+ (SS3) 2145-2215 Motorsports Weekend (E) 2230-0030 IRL (SSX)	0700-0730 Moto+ (SS1) 0830-0900 Moto+ (SS1) 0900-1100 IRL (SS3) 1800-2000 IRL (SS3) 2130-0000 World Motor Sport (SS2)	1200-1300 Max Power (SS3) 1400-1630 World Motor Sport (SS2) 1830-1930 Rally Sport (SS2) 2300-0000 Rally Sport (SS1)	1100-1200 Rally Sport (SS1)
Other satellite					0800-1230 Nextel Cup Bristol (NASN)		



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LISTINGS CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS

LETTERS AND OPINION

YOU SAY

"This season we have enjoyed some hugely entertaining racing action"

LETTER OF THE WEEK IN DEFENCE OF F1 2005

SORRY, BUT I really can't agree with Paul John (Letter of the Week, March 24) that this must be the worst start to a Formula 1 season ever. That accolade belongs to last year, when Michael Schumacher and Ferrari won five races on the trot and the opening race was a Ferrari 1-2 walkover of hugely boring proportions.

How can Paul John go on to say "even the start of last season was more entertaining than it has been so far this year"? We have seen hugely entertaining racing, incidents aplenty as drivers try to balance aggressive driving with not overcooking their tyres, and, best of all, with Red Bull Racing and Toyota doing so well, we now have at least seven teams with a good chance of at least a podium finish every race. Hopefully that will be eight teams when Anthony Davidson gets his chance in a Sauber.

What is still wrong is the ridiculous qualifying arrangement whereby the Saturday qualifying that we have beamed to our TVs actually doesn't really mean very much as far as grid position is concerned. But everyone seems agreed on this fact, except the FIA.

One last thought on the Honda engine debacle: thank you, Jim Bamber, for your superb cartoon. I haven't laughed so much for weeks!
Andy Child, by email

BUTTON IT

EB Scott of New York should shove his brain into first gear before he puts pen to paper. His description of Jenson Button as a snoot-nosed crybaby just goes to show how little attention he pays to F1.

Jenson does not whinge, moan or groan – he just gets hacked off when his team does not deliver the goods that he expects. Jenson has every right to criticise them and motivate them to do 100 times better in future.

That, Mr Scott, is what F1 team leaders are supposed to do!
Tony Buchan, by email

"JENSON DOES NOT WHINGE – HE'S JUST HACKED OFF" TONY BUCHAN

RANTING RALF

Arrogance, it seems, is something Ralf Schumacher is an expert about.

Before he rants about his big brother's mega-successful team anymore, perhaps it would be helpful to remind him that Ferrari started 2002 and 2003 with its 'old' car, and look what happened then. I don't recall the team's results being too bad at the end of those two seasons.

Of course, Ferrari's results are nothing when compared to Ralf's fantastic achievements...
Luca Biason, by email

TRY THIS FOR SIZE

I've got a great idea for ITV involving one of its three channels. Why doesn't it show the Le Mans 24 Hours live?

All ITV ever seems to show on

these digital channels are endless repeats anyway, so it's not as though anyone would miss anything important.

So, how about it ITV? Give it a go! I'm sure that I'm not the only sportscar fan who would tune in if they couldn't make it to France.
Warren Nel, Tonbridge

MAX'S MADNESS

Does the FIA set out to send F1 in the opposite direction to the wishes of its fans? Mosley has finally realised that fans want to see the cars racing each other, but through changes intended to improve racing, has made it impossible for drivers to do so.

The only two pieces of action from the Malaysian GP were caused by drivers struggling to keep control on worn tyres. The battle between Ralf Schumacher,

Nick Heidfeld and Mark Webber was a spectacle, but only happened because there was no grip for Ralf as he tried to pass Webber. Then two races were ruined at the same

hairpin when Fisichella and Webber collided and went home empty handed.

Meanwhile, Heidfeld stayed out of trouble and got on the podium. It won't be long before every driver realises there's more to be gained by not taking risks!

Alex Wall, North Yorks

GLORIOUS GOODWOOD

I've just read that the greatest ever grand prix driver – in my opinion, at least – is coming to the Goodwood Festival of Speed for the first time in 2005. Yes, four-time champ Alain Prost – the most tactically astute and cunning, not to mention blindingly quick, F1 star – will be

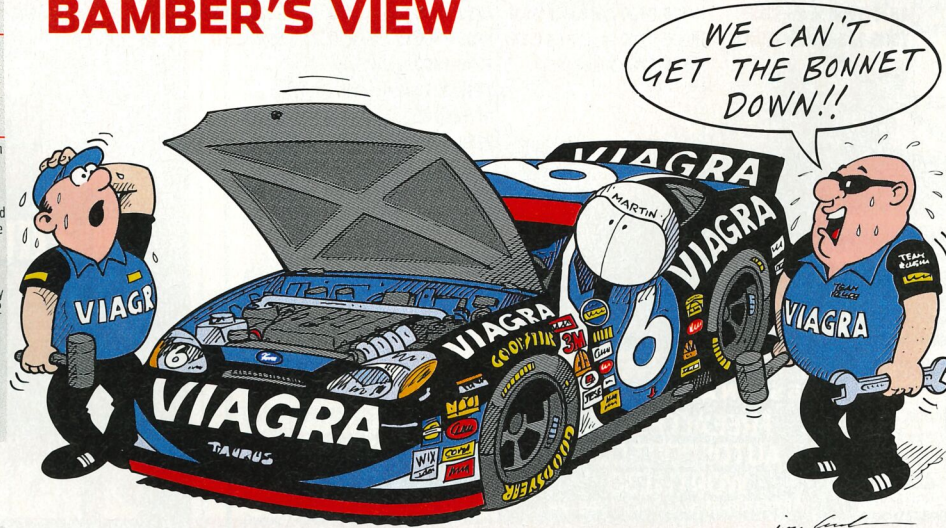
SOUND BITES

Memo to BAR. Two words: David Richards.
George Thomson, by email

I really can't see why everyone's having a pop at this year's F1 qualifying. Everyone wanted to spice it up – that's what they get, and then they moan about it. The format has muddled up the grids fantastically and we are now witnessing proper racing from the top drivers.
Dan Spurgin, Cowes

I've got to support Richard Bell, who was recently calling for the re-introduction of Autosport's marks out of 10 in the Formula 1 race reports. If there is such a wide disparity of opinions then set up a rota system so we can compare our ideas with a different pundit's each week.
Tim Pittick, by email

BAMBER'S VIEW



adding to the Sussex magic in June. It'll be great to see *Le Professeur* reunited with his 1989 title-winning McLaren Honda MP4/5. The fat-tyred, 3.5-litre flying fag packet will look and sound great on the hill.
Chris Harvey, Leicester

HOW TO RUIN A RALLY

Rally GB in a total mess? You're not wrong! The organisers have done their very best to destroy one of the sport's most important events.

For 22 years I would tour the English stately homes, most of Wales, the Lake District and Kielder while following the RAC Rally every November, and couldn't wait to do it all again 12 months later. We'll never return to those glory days, I know, but blaming a lack of top British drivers and a move to September are poor excuses for more fundamental problems.

The real issues are cost, location and access. It's too expensive to spectate, the south Wales location is too cramped and crowds are cooped up in too few vantage points. Let's move the event to mid/north Wales and return to the magic formula of cheap tickets, classic stages and more relaxed viewing points. We want flat-out forest action, thank you, not car parks, fancy stadiums, flash hospitality and cordons!

Kevin Freegard, by email

V8 AUSSIES RULE

One part of Phil Branagan's report on the Clipsal 500 V8 Supercars race in Adelaide went to show why Australian V8 Supercars is one of the best forms of motorsport anywhere.

Writing about three-time former champ Craig Lowndes' hopes looking dashed, he wrote: "he [Lowndes] found the concrete wall at the very first corner, simply engaged first, took off and hauled his car all the way to second place and second overall."

The Clipsal 500 through the streets of Adelaide is one of the world's great motor races. The way that Skaife, Ambrose, Ingall etc hurl those awesome Falcons and Commodores around is astonishing.

The biggest shame is that it's only seen live on Motors TV, and Channel 5 in the early hours of the morning, 10 days after the event. ITV and BBC take note: the whole season of V8 Supercars deserves mainstream coverage.

Mick Haven, Waterloooville

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WE SAY

"The template of motor racing is changing and fans want the events to come to them"

DAVID MALSHER – FEATURES EDITOR



AT SPRING Training last week, a former Champ Car title holder put it best: "If people ask about the health of the series, look at Dale Coyne Racing. Seems like they're going to be running Oriol Servià and Björn Wirdheim. There's not a lot wrong with that line-up is there?"

That wasn't meant as a slight against Coyne, who continues to perform miracles on a minuscule budget, but when Champ Car's equivalent of Minardi can field Champ Car's equivalent of say, Felipe Massa and Takuma Sato, things are looking good. Yes, there is a budget shortfall in more than one squad, necessitating drivers to bring sponsorship money, but that's true throughout motorsport. And when talents such as ex-F1 driver Jos Verstappen and established Champ Car winner Mario Domínguez are fighting for a berth in the series, that's got to be healthy. In fact, looking down the list of potential runners in the 2005 Champ Car World Series, I can see only a couple of tuggers, and one of those is unlikely to get a deal.

Even more impressive and reassuring is that the men at the top of the series are

hard-nosed businessmen, with sentiment kept well under control. In recent years spectator attendances at Elkhart Lake and Laguna Seca ranged from poor to abysmal, and though both are classic venues, they have been dropped in 2005, to be replaced by street races in San José CA, and Edmonton, Canada. Some might regret the proliferation of street courses on the Champ Car schedule, but the consensus within the series is that the template of motor racing is changing, and that fans want the events to come to them. No longer will the average punter (has anyone ever spotted one of these beasts, or are they in fact mythical?) drive 40 miles to sit on a grassy hill in the middle of nowhere. At a street circuit, you can expect the race course, a huge array of food facilities, toilets and merchandise stalls right there. If you want the die-hard fans to bring along their families too, that is the way forward.

The most crucial part, though, is the entertainment on track. To make a series visually stimulating, accept that however much a formula is devised – or falsified – to encourage racing, the majority of the time over a race weekend, any given car will be running solo. If that car is thrilling to watch, because it reflects the driver inputs, then a spectator feels rewarded. Which is why years on people still wax lyrical about Juan Manuel Fangio through the downhill sweepers at Rouen, Ronnie Peterson through Woodcote at Silverstone, or Juan Pablo Montoya at Nazareth. Once the performance of the car is that much in the driver's hands, good racing will naturally follow.

And that's where the Champ Car World Series scores above any other formula. So farewell Laguna, farewell Elkhart Lake (sob!), welcome Edmonton, San José and Ansan (South Korea) – and roll on Long Beach. The essentials – good drivers – are in place for a season of great racing.



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PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT



"IF BERNIE IS 'WORKING FOR THE BANKS' I TRUST THEY WILL RECOGNISE THAT HE KNOWS MOTOR RACING, AND THEY DON'T"



FOLLOWING THE debacle – no other word suffices – in Malaysia, Ferrari folk were commendably reluctant to lay blame at the feet of Bridgestone, but last week the Japanese tyre company issued a *mea culpa* statement, and promised to do better in future. Ferrari, meantime, announced that the F2005 will race in Bahrain, two races ahead of schedule, which suggests that not all the lack of pace so evident in Sepang could be ascribed to Bridgestone.

At all events, Michael Schumacher tested the new car at Mugello last week, and afterwards expressed satisfaction. The F2005 was, he said, a step forward, and it remains to be seen how much of a step – or stride – he was talking about. Whatever else, the hybrid car used in the first two races was clearly not up to the job, and there was little point in waiting until Barcelona – originally to be the first race for the F2005 – to bring on the new one.

Bridgestone claim to have made significant progress in tests since Sepang, and that will need to be the case if Schumacher and Barrichello are to be frontrunners on Sunday. I realise that the circumstances are not quite the same, but before we get too gung-ho about Ferrari's current discomfiture, bear in mind that three years ago the team brought forward the debut of the F2002 to race three – and Michael won with it. Rubens, as quick as there is at Interlagos, remained stuck with the old car, and was nowhere near Schuey's pace.

Bahrain should therefore give us a clearer idea of what the season holds, but at any grand prix what happens on the track is only part of the story, and in the paddock there is bound to be much debate about the latest developments in the saga of 'Bernie and the banks' – or should that now be 'The banks and Bernie'?

Back in December there came the first instalment, when the banks – Lehman Brothers, JP Morgan and Bayerische Landesbank – went to the High Court, claiming their right, as 75 per cent shareholders in SLEC (the holding company for Ecclestone's F1 empire), to appoint directors to it.

Seemed not unreasonable in itself – although you had to wonder how the banks had allowed such a situation to arise in the first place. Originally they had lent German media group Kirch the £865 million required to buy the shareholding, but only when Kirch went bust, and the shares reverted to the banks, did they become fully conversant with what they'd got. While Kirch had apparently had the right to appoint directors to SLEC, that right did not transfer to the banks. You'd have thought, with that kind of money involved, the phrase 'due diligence' would have crossed somebody's mind, but apparently not.

Whatever, in December they went to law, seeking to have the situation changed, and for the first time insiders began to wonder if Ecclestone's grip on F1 was about to be loosened. "If Bernie loses this case," one said to me, "he's effectively finished in the business."

That sounded a touch melodramatic, but Bernie indeed lost the case, in the sense that the judge granted the banks power over Formula One Holdings, one of the companies within SLEC.

At the time there were celebrations within the GPWC, which is seeking, of course, to operate its own championship, following the end of the current Concorde Agreement. But if Ecclestone's position had been weakened to some degree, it seemed not to make a lot of difference. He got on with doing long-term deals with circuits, and in January announced an agreement with Ferrari, under which the team agreed to extend the Concorde Agreement from 2008 to 2012 – to continue, in other words, with Bernie, rather than go with the GPWC, which to that point had enjoyed Ferrari's support.



Bernie has got Todt and Ferrari on side, but not the GPWC

Initially, there were those who concluded, 'Game, set and match to Ecclestone'; not least Eddie Jordan, who, since ceasing to be a team principal, appears to have set himself up as some kind of spokesman for Bernie. If Ferrari were on board, Jordan proclaimed, the rest would have to follow.

Not so. Indeed, when the terms of the deal – financial and otherwise – became known, the response of the other teams was a hardening of attitudes, a strengthened commitment to the GPWC. Perhaps one or two minnows might be susceptible to an advance, but the McLarens and Williams of the world didn't want to know.

December's action in the High Court was always regarded as nothing more than an initial skirmish in the battle between Bernie and the banks, with the next one scheduled for May. Now, though, it seems there will be no more, for last week it was announced that an out-of-court settlement had been reached between the parties.

Initially, it appeared that some sort of confidentiality agreement was in place, but on Friday BayernLB (formerly Bayerische Landesbank) issued a statement: 'The bank welcomes the fact that Mr Ecclestone and Bambino Holdings [the family trust] have demonstrated prudence in backing down on all the points under legal dispute. As a result, the lawsuit has been resolved.'

Ecclestone is by nature a fighter of the most tenacious kind, but I remember something he said a few years ago, when we were discussing a fight between two team principals over the services of one man. "He's made a big mistake," said Bernie. "He thinks he's won, but it's not worth it. Business is like cards: half the secret is knowing when to fold..."

So has he folded now, in the sense of accepting he had a losing hand? Knowing Ecclestone, I find that hard to believe, but if he is now effectively 'working for the banks', I trust they have the sense to recognise that he knows motor racing, and they do not. As Flavio Briatore said last autumn, "At the moment, nobody really knows who's in charge of F1 – is it the manufacturers, is it Bernie, is it the banks? There's a lot of confusion, but I tell you what, F1 cannot be controlled by banks – they won't have an agreement with the teams, this is sure."

One suggestion is that perhaps the banks will sell their shareholding in SLEC to the manufacturers – in other words, to the GPWC. In terms of allowing them to get out of the business, which surely they must want, and dispelling fears of two rival championships, that would make sense. For the moment, though, the labyrinthine game continues. ☒

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F1'S INSIDE LINE

MARK HUGHES IN FERRARI'S DEFENCE



"THE BIGGEST CONTRIBUTOR TO A BIG FALL-OFF IN FERRARI COMPETITIVENESS HAS BEEN FIA REGULATION CHANGE"



TWO PIECES of commonly perceived Formula 1 wisdom: 1) the FIA favours Ferrari; 2) the tyre war is a bad thing. I'm not so sure about either.

Look, I'm not a Ferrari apologist.

The team has over the years displayed a ruthless political will in using its unrivalled clout to its own competitive ends, in a way that leaves rival British teams appearing politically inept. For example, time and again major technological leaps from rival teams have been initially okayed by the governing body, only for permission to be rescinded following objections from Ferrari. Then there's the thorny matter of golden hellos and enhanced cuts of revenues. But looking at the team's current competitive dip and the reasons behind it, it's difficult not to draw parallels with 2003; both times the biggest single contributor to a big fall-off in Ferrari competitiveness has been FIA regulation change. Twice in the last three years, in other words, Ferrari's rivals have been handed a major helping hand from the governing body.

Back in 2003 it was the late notice change to parc fermé qualifying that caught the reds on the hop, having designed a new car with a weight distribution that required major set-up changes between qualifying and race – changes that were no longer allowed. This time the tyre usage restrictions could have been tailor-made to punish the characteristics of the Bridgestone tyres on the Ferrari and thereby aid Michelin and their teams massively.

This is a time, more than any other, that Ferrari desperately needs test miles. Not only do they have a performance shortfall to sort out but the major component of that shortfall – their tyre partner – is inherently hampered in testing power through being aligned only to one major team. Bridgestone reckon they have completed just 20 per cent of the F1 test mileage of Michelin over the winter because of this.

Now partly this is Ferrari's own doing. It has pushed for tyre exclusivity and has enjoyed the benefits of that. Now comes the price.

Given the gentleman's agreement between the other nine teams about the restriction of testing – and Ferrari's point-blank refusal to be a partner to that agreement – there is naturally a lot of ill-disguised glee at the problems the team is facing on the track at the moment. But it is the very fact that it needs to test itself out of its problems that is making its alignment with the others on this matter an absolute non-starter. As Ross Brawn says, "To agree to that would be to sign our own death warrant."

He further points out that the whole discussion about cost savings has reached an emotional impasse, given the antipathy towards the team from the others. "We're probably guilty of that too," he accepts. "We would really like to be part of that process, but we've just been cut out of it and so we've reacted emotionally too. There are a lot of things we'd like to discuss about saving costs. But why should we accept a limitation on testing? Why not a limitation on two wind tunnels, like Williams have, or a limitation on the construction of vast new technical centres like McLaren have? When we adhered to the day limit on testing [in 2003] we had to get through more work in a shorter space of time and so therefore utilised a shift system to complete extremely intensive programmes. Now that we no longer have that limitation we can plan more economically. I happen to know that at least one team has a set of people on stand by at testing venues monitoring the weather to determine



The FIA rule changes have made testing more crucial than ever

whether it's going to be worth testing in the next few days and using up valuable allocated days. Where's the cost saving in that? [Williams technical director] Sam Michael recently began to agree with some of these points but was then berated by Patrick Head because it wasn't team policy, I guess."

Now think to the near-unanimity from the teams (Ferrari aside) about the desirability of a single tyre formula. Now think just how much a single tyre formula would help Ferrari right at this moment. On the same rubber as everyone else, and with a new car that is genuinely up to 1sec per lap faster than the F2004M, how do you imagine Ferrari would fare in the coming races? There's every reason to suspect we'd be back to the domination of 2002 and 2004.

The tyre war is yet again providing us with a mechanism that has completely brought alive the season. There is no doubt that the testing mileage it brings has driven team costs up enormously, and it's true that Ferrari has benefited from Bridgestone exclusivity by getting the tyre company to share its development costs. "But that's just a commercial transaction," asserts Brawn. "Just like an engine supplier giving engines free of charge to a team. We don't complain about that even though we pay for our own engines."

Besides, a tyre war surely doesn't have to mean big testing costs. Why can't the FIA simply specify to the tyre companies that they can only provide tyres to the teams on race weekends? Then we'd still have the competitive to-and-fro of a tyre war without the associated testing costs. Yes, it would probably hurt Ferrari in the short term, but then what's new? ☒

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FERRARI IN A FIX

SPECIAL FEATURE Technical director Ross Brawn explains the problems that have blighted the champion's early-season form. By MARK HUGHES

It's a question that has to be asked – why? Why is the most dominant team in the history of Formula 1, with one of the greatest drivers of all time, suddenly looking like an also-ran? Ferrari's technical director, Ross Brawn, gave the answers after the Malaysian Grand Prix with surprising good humour: "I wouldn't say that it's boring winning all of the time, but sometimes you need to taste the sour to appreciate the sweet."

Michael Schumacher scored a scant two points in Malaysia, having qualified 13th, with no extenuating circumstances. Meanwhile, Renault's Fernando Alonso is making full use of a dynamite car and a clear tyre advantage, making hay while the Ferrari seems fit only for making silage. You can bet the champion is concerned. "Yes, he called me during testing of the new car recently," says Brawn. "I was trying to work out where he was because it was a strange time of day for him to be calling. He was in Thailand, where it was about 2am, and he was very keen to know about how the car had gone."

You can bet also that Schumacher was pretty searching in his questions about the tyres. Sepang has traditionally been a bogey circuit for the team's tyre partner, Bridgestone, a place where equatorial track temperatures have invariably played into the hands of rival supplier Michelin. So maybe it was just an anomaly?

Well, ask Brawn which, between Australia – where Rubens Barrichello glided to a solid second – and Malaysia, is the better indicator of how competitive Ferrari really is, and he'll tell you it's the latter. "There is a mountain to climb," he insists. "I don't think just going back to a cooler environment [than Malaysia] is going to solve the problem. There's a pretty stiff challenge ahead. That said, I'm optimistic Malaysia is as bad as it will get."

Brawn will also tell you, quite categorically, that it's about more than just the tyres. "We've got to do a better job on the

Main: Brawn probably hasn't worn such a pained expression since Ferrari's last crisis in mid-2003

Below left: Barrichello tests the F2004M's limit in Australia, but he was still second

Below right: The Ferraris find themselves in unfamiliar territory – squabbling with the Saubers and Red Bulls in Sepang

car, engine and traction control. We've got to find percentages from all those areas, as well as finding gains with the tyres. I don't think Bridgestone will find a solution by themselves, and we won't, either. The partnership is what will do it."

Ferrari's tech boss said very similar things the last time the team was in competitive crisis – late mid-season 2003 when for a time it appeared as if it was about to badly lose the world championship. The parallels don't stop there, either. Just as in '03, the root cause of the dip is regulation changes by the sport's governing body, the FIA, that have hurt Ferrari more than its rivals. So much for the commonly cited paddock joke that FIA stands for 'Ferrari International Aid'.

It is about more than just the tyres. The interim car, the F2004M, is a significantly compromised adaptation of last year's machine. The F2005, purpose-built to the new regs, is certain to be a major improvement – to the tune, Brawn reckons, "of somewhere between 0.5 and one second per lap". But the reason the new car wasn't ready for the start of the year relates to how the change in diffuser regulations brought far more severe penalties for Ferrari than other teams because of their respective transmission layouts.

Aerodynamic and tyre performance are intimately entwined, and so the downforce-light F2004M is definitely contributing to the tyre problem. But, make no mistake, the biggest problem is currently the tyre itself. Even Bridgestone admits as much.

The 'one set of tyres per race' rule has punished a particular characteristic of the Bridgestone that has been apparent ever since Michelin re-entered the fray four years ago. No matter what development paths the two tyre companies have embarked upon over the years, the one unfaltering distinction is that a Bridgestone tread runs hotter than a Michelin. Tread temperature is intimately related to wear – and once past a certain critical point of temperature, wear rates go off the



SCUDERIA'S SLUMP

scale. The penalty for the greater running heat of the Bridgestone has varied according to the prevailing regulations. For the past two years, with *parc fermé* qualifying meaning frequent pitstops, and tyres that needed to last only 15-20 laps, wear has not been a critical factor. With regulations now demanding a set of tyres last throughout qualifying and the race, wear rate has become perhaps the most important differentiating factor of all.

"What we have to ensure above all else," says Bridgestone's technical manager, Hisao Suganuma, "is that the tyre can last the race. Only from that starting point can we find performance, and at the moment this is the level of performance we have when we give the tyre the necessary durability. It's not good enough, and we are working very hard to find a solution."

Michelin's Pierre Dupasquier cannot disguise his amusement at how the rule change has played directly into the French company's hands. "The new rules bring a big challenge in judging wear against performance. In its most basic form, you simply take from performance and give to the wear. But not when you are smart, and, thanks to [FIA president] Max Mosley, a new domain of research has been opened. Our chemical guys worked hard, and they just dug in their knowledge, not willing to lose anything in performance, but at the same time improving durability. The construction people worked hard as well in the same direction."

Michelin's lower running temperature has given it huge scope to play with compounds to meet the durability requirements and still have speed. Bridgestone's options are far narrower, courtesy of the higher running temperatures that are an intrinsic corollary of a different technical philosophy.

This philosophy is at the very heart of Bridgestone's concept of a tyre, and hence it is not the work of a moment to simply design one with a lower running temperature and therefore better performance for a given durability. A Bridgestone derives more of its performance from 'mechanical' grip than a Michelin and less from 'chemical' grip. Chemical grip concerns the chemical bonding of the tyre's surface to that of the track at a molecular level. Mechanical grip is to do with how the tyre keys in to the track surface. The rubber of the contact patch deforms as it encounters the tiny surface irregularities of the track, but not in a uniform way. It does not immediately rebound but rather drapes itself over the irregularity. Because of its deformation, it cannot push as hard against the surface of one side of the irregularity as it is doing on the other. This difference results in friction and that creates grip. It also creates heat. Heat creates wear. Wear means that harder compounds have to be used, reducing further the chemical grip.

Softer compounds, as used by Michelin, tend not to be as consistent over a short stint because the associated problem of graining has to be endured. Under the old regulations, it made them quite evenly matched with the harder-compound, more consistent Bridgestone, whose downside of higher running temperatures and therefore wear was not serious, given the

Main: All eyes will be on Schuey in Bahrain for the debut of the F2005

Right: Bridgestone has its work cut out to match the durability of rival Michelin

Below right: In testing, the F2005 has shown much-needed higher levels of downforce

short stints. Dramatically increase the stint durations, as in the '05 regulations, and suddenly the Michelin's consistency is better (no repeated graining phases) and the Bridgestone's wear is excessive (no regular replacement).

Bridgestone is an exceptionally capable entity and will come up with a solution. But will it be in time to save Ferrari's title bacon? Especially given that its testing power is vastly smaller than Michelin's. "Because we're the only serious runner on Bridgestones," explains Brawn, "we've done only 20 per cent of the test mileage of the Michelin teams, and it's a very steep learning curve on the tyres at the moment. So that might be hurting us, yes. But as the curve evens out, hopefully it will be less of a factor."

The revised aero regs have made for a double whammy. "Our [existing] engine and transmission package was not very good for the new regs," claims Brawn, "because once you constrain a diffuser on the outside, the central part becomes much more important, and so you have to expand the inside. Once you do that, you have to start to look at your gearbox and engine in a much more extreme way. We decided we didn't have the right package, and had to start again with the transmission and some detail with the engine. That's what took the time. Others may have been more fortunate in that their existing engine/transmission was suitable, but ours wasn't. We were suddenly faced with the problem of lifting everything up and getting it out the way." Which is why the F2005 couldn't be readied for the start of the season.

Increasing the regulation height of the front wing and therefore reducing the frontal downforce may also yet hurt Ferrari disproportionately to the others. Designers have been forced to move weight distribution back to match the revised centre of pressure, because a mismatch between the two hurts transient behaviour. The scope for doing this on the F2004M was limited, but the F2005 features this rearward shift. However, that only puts yet more load onto the marginal Bridgestone rear. The front tyre is not the issue, and it was probably for this reason the car looked okay in Melbourne, one of the very few circuits where the cars are front limited.

Sepang will probably go down as the competitive nadir of Ferrari's season, and the only way is up. The superior downforce of the new car will contribute a big chunk of lap time and help with the tyre wear. Coming away from the extreme track temperatures, the Bridgestone temperature/wear issue will be reduced. But it will not go away, not until Bridgestone makes a significant breakthrough, at any rate. The new FIA rules have seen to that.

If Ferrari can be seen to be at the mercy of both Bridgestone and the FIA in its current plight, it is not entirely blameless. It is now feeling the downside of the tyre exclusivity it pushed hard for in the past. "It's a double-edged sword," admits Brawn. "When the other tyre brand is strong, we've got a lot of competition. On the other hand, when we're strong, we don't have to share the points with anyone. It's all part and parcel of the tyre war."

So there's why. The next question is 'how long'?

WHY RENAULT IS FLYING

FINAL PIECE OF THE PUZZLE THAT PUT SCHUEY'S OLD TEAM IN FRONT

THE BIG question for the season ahead is whether the Ferrari F2005, plus improvements from Bridgestone, add up to something that can equal the Renault R25 chassis/Michelin tyre combination.

The R25 has taken the key strengths of Renaults of the previous couple of years and added to it the one ingredient that had always been missing—engine performance. When the Ferrari F2004Ms were quick down the Sepang straights, you suspected it was due to being light on downforce. When the R25 was similarly quick, the evidence of its lap time told you it could only be

down to horsepower and possibly low drag.

The car is easy on its tyres (although not as easy apparently as the McLaren), it has a very strong driver line-up and the team is operationally perhaps the only one you might bracket with Ferrari. Which is unsurprising, given that the two share a common ancestry—Schumacher-era Benetton.

"RENAULT HAS THE MISSING INGREDIENT - ENGINE POWER"



Alonso made it two wins from two races for Renault in the Malaysian heat

COURTESY



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FERRARI

McLAREN CAN IMPROVE

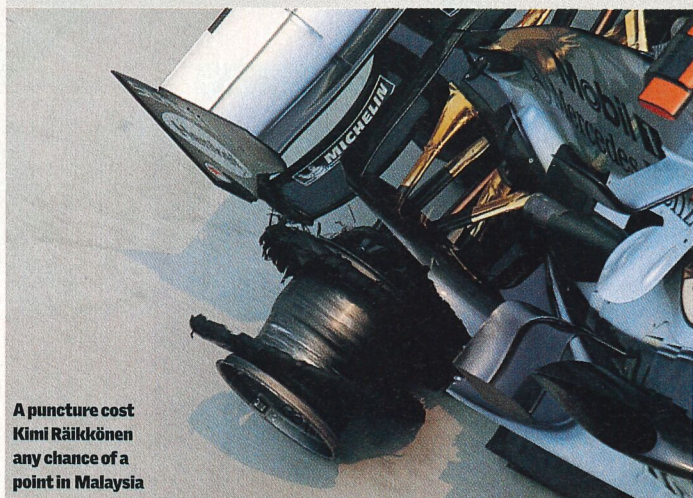
A FALTERING START – BUT THE BEST IS YET TO COME

THE McLAREN MP4-20's potential hasn't quite come across in the opening two races of 2005. It seems to be a trickier car to balance than the Renault, but there's reason to believe that it's just waiting to be unlocked.

The car's key asset is how extremely kind it is to its tyres. This may be hurting it in one-lap qualifying, but is a potent strength in the new one set of tyres per race era. Like Renault, the team began the year with an explosive driver combination, but the recent injury of Juan Pablo Montoya puts a dent in this. In the first

two races, Montoya and Kimi Räikkönen seemed more openly out to usurp each other – and this may prove costly over a season. Renault's line-up seems more harmonious.

There are two shortfalls in the car, both of which the team is confident will be attended to by upgrades in Spain. The first of these is a lack of straightline speed, and fingers of suspicion are hovering over the engine. The other is an inherent slow-corner understeer that seems to cost more time than the Renault's similar characteristic.



A puncture cost Kimi Räikkönen any chance of a point in Malaysia

GETTY IMAGES

TEEL/AT

Amid the political hoopla surrounding Paul Stoddart's ongoing assault on the FIA, few seem to have noticed that his Minardi team is celebrating the 20th anniversary of its arrival in Formula 1. Even the man himself thinks that 2004, the 20th actual season, was the occasion to have a party. In fact, this is the perfect time to sit up and take note, not least because Minardi old boys have filled the front row at the last two grands prix.

The actual start came in Brazil on April 7 1985, when Pierluigi Martini crept onto the back of the grid, his hopelessly underpowered Cosworth car some 12 seconds off Keke Rosberg's turbocharged pole.

A look at the entry list for that Rio race tells its own story, for it contains names such as Lotus, Brabham, Tyrrell, Arrows, Ligier, Alfa Romeo, Zakspeed, RAM and Osella. Minardi apart, the only teams that have survived with their identities intact are Ferrari, McLaren and Williams. To that list can be added Renault, an amalgamation of the Toleman and original Renault teams of 20 years ago.

Minardi has outlived not just those listed above, but many more teams that were born after 1985 and didn't survive their formative years. It has endured perilous financial times and several changes of ownership, and has done so with an Italian flair that has won it fans all over the world, and up and down the paddock. It says a lot about the team's unique environment that founder Giancarlo Minardi has stayed on in a subsidiary role five years after Stoddart took control – both parties can cope with an arrangement that others might see as untenable.

"That's a testimony to the man," says Stoddart. "I'm not going to say we haven't had our squabbles, because we have.

Giancarlo respects the fact that the ultimate decisions will always be made by me. I'm sure he doesn't agree with them all the time, the same as I don't always agree with his, but we've managed to find a working relationship that's lasted five years. People probably thought it wouldn't last five minutes!

"He's a racer through and through. His role now is to look at young drivers, and also to look for sponsorship in certain parts of the world where he has a profile and a presence. He deals with some of the day-to-day politics that come with owning the team. He has a pretty good record for talent-spotting."

Minardi first made his name as a Formula 2 constructor, but when his team went to that Brazilian Grand Prix in 1985, it consisted of just 16 people. Four stayed at home, namely the storesman, two guys in the technical office and a truckie who doubled as a chef. That left a travelling crew of just 12 in Rio, plus driver Martini.

That number wasn't quite enough to man a pitstop, even with team boss Giancarlo leaving his post on the pitwall to operate the front jack. A volunteer was sought in the paddock to help out on the left front wheel, and one was found in the shape of former Osella F1 driver Miguel Angel Guerra.

"The beautiful thing is that 20 years ago this is something which could happen," says Minardi. "Nowadays it would be impossible and considered unprofessional. What a pity!

"Many years have gone by, but I think that day was the best in my motor racing history. Unfortunately the air you breathe in the garage now is not the one you breathed in those days. The atmosphere is definitely different."

One of the guys on the crew in Rio was mechanic Luca Zama, and he's still on the race team today, at 41 a veteran of two decades of highs and lows.

"Giancarlo for me is firstly a good friend," says Zama. ➡

20

Main: Stoddart's proudest moment as team boss came when Webber finished fifth in Australia 2002

Right: Minardi crept onto the grid in '85, with Martini at the wheel





YEARS OF MINARDI

SPECIAL FEATURE Everyone's favourite underdog has stood the test of time in Formula 1. By ADAM COOPER

20 YEARS OF MINARDI

Right: Alonso, one of Minardi's rising stars, made his debut with the team in 2001

Far right: Founder Giancarlo Minardi is no longer in charge but still works for the team

“He’s different from other team bosses. The problem is he can be too passionate. His language is not so technical. I think in some decisions he trusted some engineers too much! But F1 needs more passion. Now the system is too much like a robot.”

Apart from Zama, four other members of the tiny original team have remained with Minardi throughout the past 20 years, including the current heads of the logistics, composite and production departments. There’s loyalty on both sides. Giancarlo himself says the survival of the team that carries his name is all about its staff.

“Minardi is made up of an exceptional group of people, who have been able to build cars with dignity,” he says. “All the drivers have been important for the big contribution they have made. Obviously, Martini did 103 grands prix with Minardi and the relationship with him can be considered a bit special.”

It is no longer Minardi’s job to balance the books, but for 15 years he did a remarkable job to keep things ticking over.

“All the financial commitments have always been fulfilled,” he says. “One thing has to be said – we have always done our job to be present at the races even though we have not won them, without the pressure that many teams have experienced in the past.”

“But Minardi is based in Italy and it is therefore difficult to attract sponsors when there is already the best F1 team, Ferrari. For many years we have found new sponsors which have been stolen by other teams, which could offer them a better visibility. In addition to that, Minardi has always survived thanks to customer engines. Not always has the price been proportional to their performance...”

That last remark is well-aimed. Engines are everything in F1, and it’s worth noting that in its best seasons – 1991 and ’93 – Minardi had equipment from Ferrari and Cosworth that gave it parity with much bigger teams, and points finishes resulted.

It’s often forgotten that at one stage ownership passed

through the hands of Flavio Briatore, who came along at a time when the founder was in trouble.

“Minardi has always been on the edge financially,” says the current Renault team boss. “It’s been very consistent in that, it always was a drama! Giancarlo was always looking for drivers with potential, not only money. I really worked very well with him, and this was the reason why when Minardi was in great difficulty I bought part of the team, a majority – 80 per cent – in about 1992-93. Now it’s a little bit different from what it was before. Paul is more political, although I believe he should concentrate a little more on the team. The team needs more performance and better drivers.”

That a sly barb from a man whose support of Stoddart’s recent campaigns is perhaps not quite as solid as it might be. The politics may have taken his focus in recent months, but Stoddy has a clear idea of his team’s role within the sport.

“Minardi are the eternal battlers, and the team that most people would say is their second favourite,” he says. “They’re the perennial underdogs. But what have we done? If you look, over the years we’ve brought more drivers through than anyone else. We have a pedigree of being a proving ground or apprenticeship for people to go through.”

“In the end it is fair to say that teams like Minardi will always have a place in F1. It’s true that without teams like Minardi, how could manufacturers sustain an involvement in the sport? If the day ever comes when all the independents are gone, simple mathematics says that one of them has to be last. That’s not something that can be sustained in a boardroom.”

“At the top end we’re a breeding ground for talent, at the bottom end we protect their arses from the embarrassment of finishing last. And along the way people forget where a lot of mechanics and technical people start their careers. It’s probably far easier to get a job at Minardi than any other team.”

Don’t believe it? Well, the man who designed the Ferrari



» 20 YEARS OF MINARDI

THE CARS, THE ENGINES, THE DRIVERS, AND THE ODD POINT HERE AND THERE



1985(FORD) Martini; Opts



1986(MOTORI-MODERNI) de Cesaris, Nannini; Opts



1987(MOTORI-MODERNI) Campos, Nannini; Opts

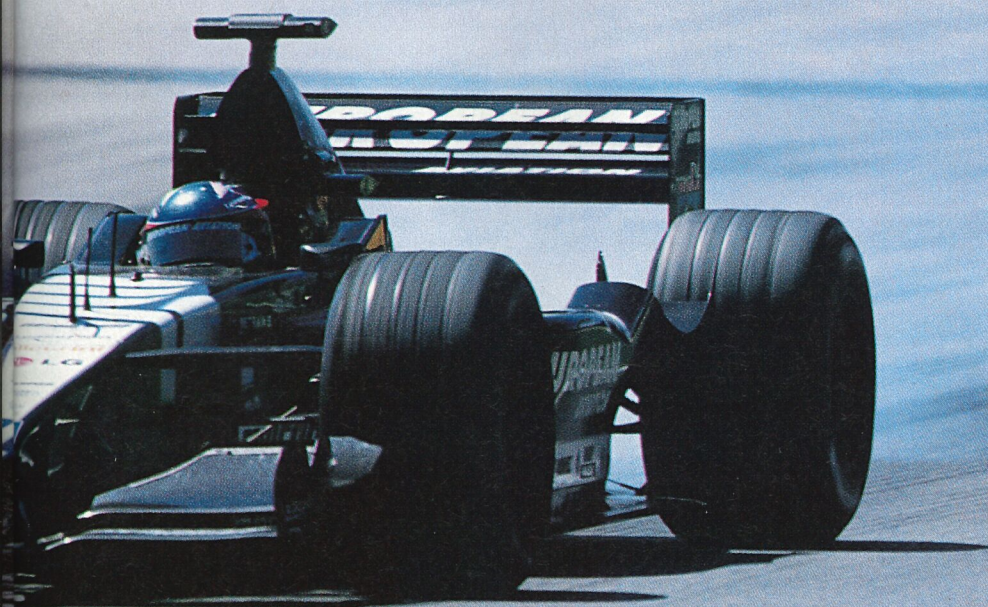


1988(FORD) Campos, Martini, Sala; 1pt



1989(FORD) Barilla, Martini, Sala; 6pts

"MINARDI ARE THE ETERNAL BATTLERS, AND THE TEAM THAT MOST PEOPLE WOULD SAY IS THEIR SECOND FAVOURITE" **PAUL STODDART**



1990 (FORD) Barilla, Martini, Morbidelli; **0pts**



1991 (FERRARI) Martini, Morbidelli, Moreno; **6pts**



1992 (LAMBORGHINI) Fittipaldi, Morbidelli, Zanardi; **1pt**



1993 (FORD) Barbazza, Fittipaldi, Gounon, Martini; **7pts**



1994 (FORD) Alboreto, Martini; **5pts**

The Cosworth Years.



1988



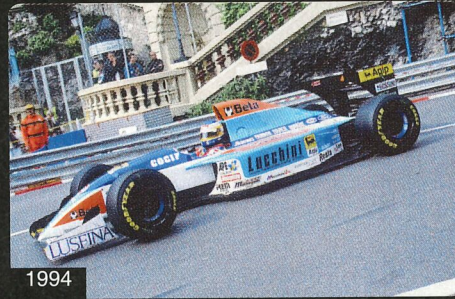
1989



1990



1993



1994



1995



1996



1998



1999



2000



2003



2004



2005

Cosworth congratulates Minardi on 20 years in Formula One.

COSWORTH
www.cosworth.com

20 YEARS OF MINARDI

☐ F2005, Aldo Costa, worked at Minardi until 1996.

"We're pretty damn proud of what we've done," continues Stoddart. "We'd love to win, but on the budgets we've got, competition in itself is winning. When people ask why do we bother, they have no conception of what they're talking about. We bother because F1 as it is today is the undisputed pinnacle of motorsport. The fact is that just competing at this level is in itself a victory. We're one of 10 franchises in the world."

Minardi's kindergarten role has been clearly demonstrated this season. Fernando Alonso (2001), Giancarlo Fisichella ('96), Jarno Trulli ('97) and Mark Webber ('02) are all fighting at the sharp end of the grid, while Ferrari test drivers Luca Badoer and Marc Gené are both graduates of the Faenza operation. BAR's Anthony Davidson also had a couple of starts with the team in '02.

Apart from Badoer, all these guys made their F1 debuts with the team, as did the likes of Martini, Alessandro Nannini, Christian Fittipaldi and Justin Wilson. Only very rarely has Minardi employed drivers coming to the end of their careers.

Stoddart insists there is no better place than Minardi to start: "They come from F3000 and they don't know what's hit them when they walk into this paddock. You can either jump off the top of the diving board and end up in the shark pit, or jump off from 10 feet up, have a nice soft landing and swim."

"Minardi provides that kind of apprenticeship for drivers. You're not expected to do anything, so if you do something

you're a hero. You can name a lot of drivers who have started in a big team and their careers are over as soon as they start. That's the difference."

"I have very good memories," agrees Trulli, who started just six races before being parachuted into Prost in the middle of 1997. "It was my debut team, and it was a nice family team with not much expectation, a low profile and a little budget. But it was always respected by everybody. Me, Fisichella, Alonso and Webber all came through Minardi, so it can't have been too bad. You really need to show your true potential somewhere."

"For Giancarlo [Minardi], the team is like a family. He treats everybody like a son and probably that was his mistake, if we can say there was one! He's got a lot of passion for the team, the people, the sport, but it's become more of a business than anything else."

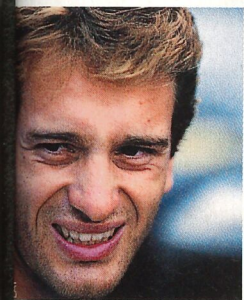
Webber's 2002 season with Minardi helped to propel him to the big time, and he remains grateful to Stoddart.

"No question about it," says Webber, "it was a great way to start F1 in terms of getting to know the business, and getting to know what's important on race weekends. It's a small operation and we had hardly any testing, so it was all about Friday, Saturday and Sunday and learning how to cope with what direction you've got to go."

"Minardi laid the basic foundations for me in the perfect environment. It was an ideal school. There are some clever guys there, but they've had absolutely no chance to

Right: Martini scored the team's best qualifying result, starting second at Phoenix in 1990

Below: Trulli is one of many young drivers to get their F1 break at Minardi. However in '94 Michele Alboreto ended his GP career at the team

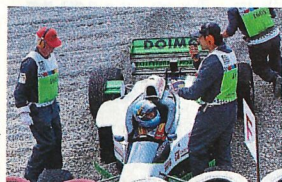


>> 20 YEARS OF MINARDI

THE CARS, THE ENGINES, THE DRIVERS, AND THE ODD POINT HERE AND THERE



1995 (FORD) Badoer, Lamy, Martini; 1pt



1996 (FORD) Fisichella, Lamy, Lavaggi, Marques; 0pts



1997 (HART) Katayama, Marques, Trulli; 0pts



1998 (FORD) Nakano, Tuero; 0pts



1999 (FORD) Badoer, Gené, Sarrazin; 1pt



develop, they've not been given wings. When you've got their respect, they'll do everything for you. And I'd still do anything for them."

The 2005 line-up, Patrick Friesacher and Christijan Albers, is stronger than the first couple of races have suggested. Both have endured a tough baptism with a worn out old package that had already done three seasons before its overnight 'cut and shut' job in Melbourne. They are itching to get their hands on the new car, due for Imola. Crucially, its engine will be identical to the one that has earned four points finishes out of four for Red Bull.

"In Melbourne we made an old car into a total dog by

butchering it to pieces, and we're stuck with it for another race," says Stoddart. "The new car is not like any Minardi you've ever seen before. We know the engine is mega, we know the weight distribution is really good for us, we know that the aero package is really good. The issue is going to be reliability, because it's not going to have had any testing.

"Let's be clear on this. We're only racing Jordan. Our target is to beat Jordan. And I think with the new car, we will beat them. Maybe on a good day when Bridgestone are ahead of Michelin, we might get someone else."

It's appropriate that the car will make its bow at Imola, just a few miles up the road from Faenza. Giancarlo Minardi hasn't been at the early races, but he will be present at his home track, his enthusiasm undimmed.

"It would be unfair to lie saying that I'm happy," he admits, "but this is how it is and the new boss is fully entitled to control everything 100 per cent. As long as this sport continues giving me emotions and adrenaline, I will be here, even if it is just as a consultant. If one day I realise that I am not useful anymore, I will immediately retire. But Minardi will always be there!"

MINNOWS' MILESTONE

20 YEARS OF MINARDI

Above: Martini went through tough times as Minardi's longest-serving driver

Main: Not one of the team's finer moments... A spinning Esteban Tuero collects Johnny Herbert's Sauber at Austria '98; team-mate Shinji Nakano looks on



>> 20 YEARS OF MINARDI

THE CARS, THE ENGINES, THE DRIVERS, AND THE ODD POINT HERE AND THERE



2000 (FORD) Gené, Mazzacane; **0pts**



2001 (FORD) Alonso, Marques, Young; **0pts**



2002 (ASIATECH) Webber, Young, Davidson; **2pts**



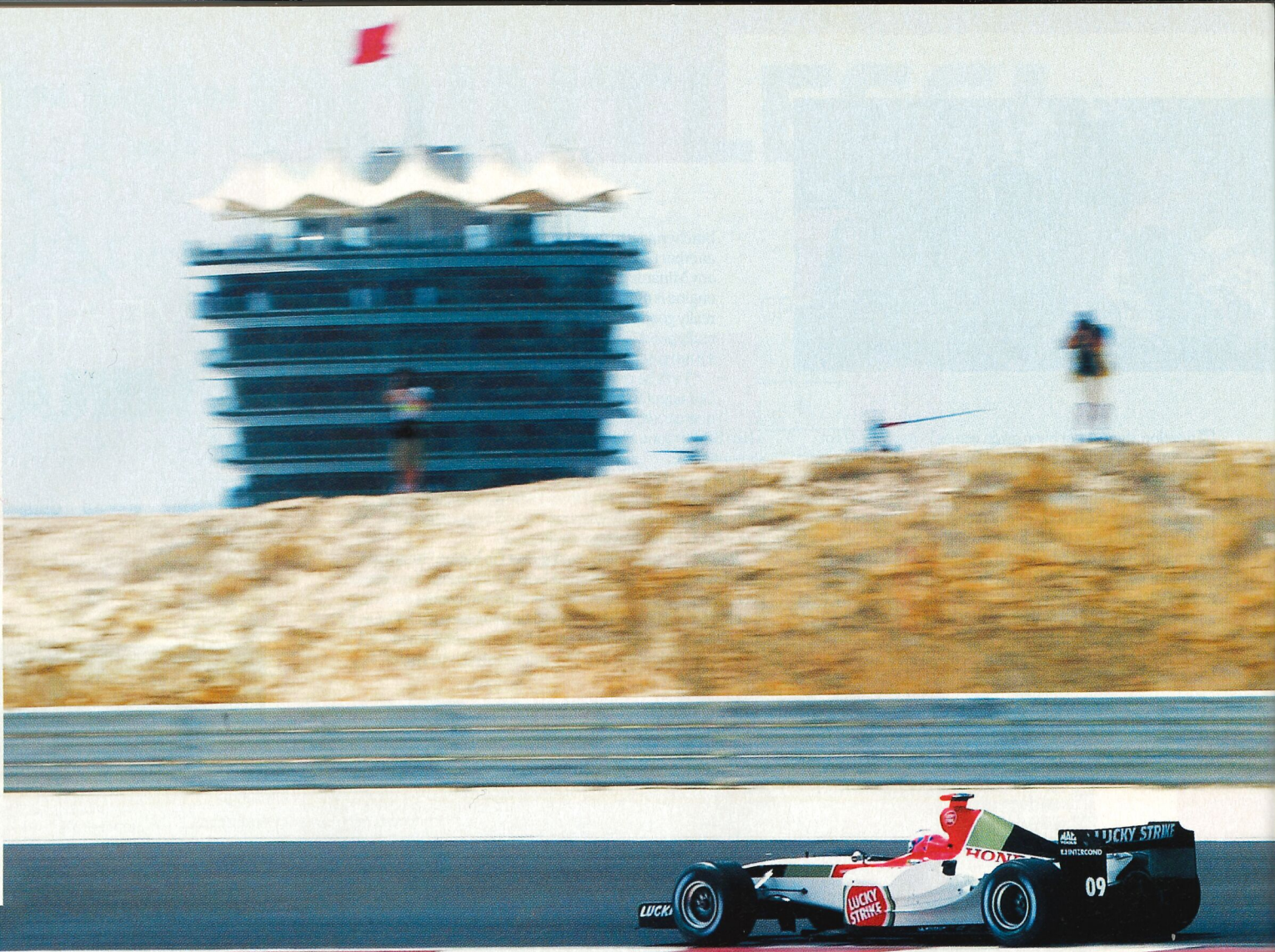
2003 (FORD) Wilson, Verstappen, Kiesa; **0pts**



2004 (FORD) Baumgartner, Bruni; **1pt**

BAHRAIN
1-3.4.05
ROUND 3

GP PREVIEW



Jenson Button scored his second straight podium finish in the inaugural Bahrain GP

THE THREE CRUCIAL QUESTIONS SAUBER'S HARD-CHARGING YOUNG GUN GIVES THE LOW-DOWN ON THE DESERT GP

FELIPE MASSA



HOW QUICK WILL YOU BE IN BAHRAIN?

I'm pretty confident we'll be better in Bahrain than we were at Malaysia. The circuit suits our car better. At the moment we're not so good in the high-speed stuff, but the Bahrain circuit should be better for us because it only has three really high-speed sections. The rest is all slow and medium-speed corners. I was surprised at that when we raced there for the first time last year. The track layout makes it look faster than it is.

We have some new parts coming for the C24, which should help us be stronger at tracks where aerodynamic performance is important. Whatever happens, we're hoping to be better than we were last year, when both our cars finished outside the top 10. It was one of our worst races all year, because we were still having a lot of problems getting a balance with the C23 chassis. I think we'll do better this time. There are a lot of good teams this year ahead of us, all of which will take the big points, so it's hard for us to score. But that has to be our aim. Leaving Bahrain with a point would be great for us.

The track is very dusty, which always causes a few problems with grip and chassis set-up, but at least this year we know what to expect. It's okay to drive – not as good as Shanghai, Spa or Suzuka, but not too bad. The surface is very smooth and it has a couple of good overtaking spots: at the last corner

and at the end of the main straight. But other than that it's quite tight. The corners are well designed though and the track has a good feel when you drive it.

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM THE NEW FERRARI?

They are bound to be strong, you can be certain of that. The F2005 tested well and both the drivers seemed happy straight away. They'll still be there, fighting for the title, even if it takes them a race or two to get the best out of the new car. I think they'll still have trouble getting on terms with Renault straight away though. That car is really fast. And Toyota did a fantastic job in Malaysia, which nobody was expecting – except the Toyota guys, maybe! They've taken a huge step forward.

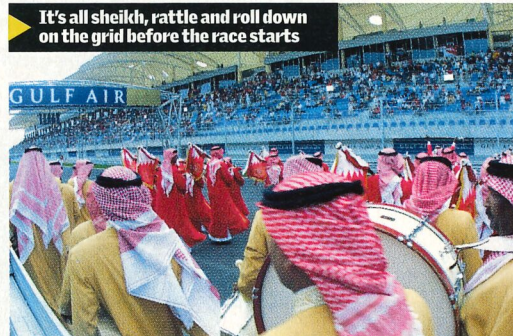
WHAT'S UP WITH McLAREN?

You know, it's strange that McLaren haven't been stronger than they were in the first two races. In winter testing they looked to be right there with Renault, if not even faster, but in Australia and Malaysia they didn't seem to quite get it together. It's not as simple as saying the car isn't fast, because on track it looks good and some of Kimi [Räikkönen's] lap times at Sepang were really fast. But the car doesn't seem to be consistent enough.

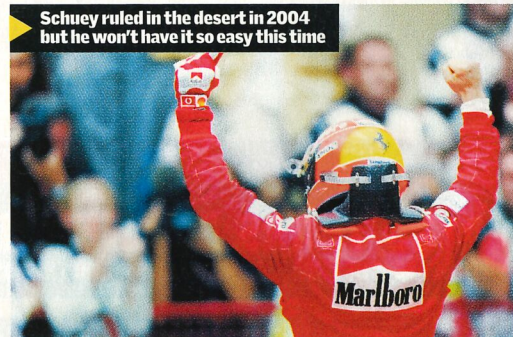
AUTOSPORT PREDICTION

RACE WINNER
FERNANDO ALONSO
POLE POSITION
JARNO TRULLI

It's all sheikh, rattle and roll down on the grid before the race starts



Schuey ruled in the desert in 2004 but he won't have it so easy this time



Kimi Räikkönen's race was ruined by an exploding McMerc 12 months ago



BAHRAIN GRAND PRIX STATISTICS AND RACE ODDS

Number	Driver	Car	Bah GP starts	Best Bah qualifying	Best Bah finish	Career GP's	Career GP wins	Career points	Bah GP odds
1	Michael Schumacher	Ferrari	1	1 (1)	1 (1)	214	83	1188	Evans
2	Rubens Barrichello	Ferrari	1	2 (1)	2 (1)	199	9	459	8/1
3	Jenson Button	BAR-Honda	1	6 (1)	3 (1)	86	0	130	25/1
4	Takuma Sato	BAR-Honda	1	5 (1)	5 (1)	37	0	39	50/1
5	Fernando Alonso	Renault	1	17 (1)	6 (1)	51	2	130	10/11
6	Giancarlo Fisichella	Renault	1	11 (1)	11 (1)	143	2	126	5/2
7	Mark Webber	Williams-BMW	1	14 (1)	8 (1)	51	0	30	25/1
8	Nick Heidfeld	Williams-BMW	1	15 (1)	15 (1)	86	0	34	20/1
9	Kimi Räikkönen	McLaren-Mercedes	1	NO TIME (1)	DNF (1)	69	2	170	8/1
10	Juan Pablo Montoya	McLaren-Mercedes	1	3 (1)	13 (1)	69	4	229	7/1
11	Jacques Villeneuve	Sauber-Petronas	0	NA	N/A	135	11	219	200/1
12	Felipe Massa	Sauber-Petronas	1	13 (1)	12 (1)	35	0	16	150/1
14	David Coulthard	Red Bull-Cosworth	1	10 (1)	DNF (1)	176	13	483	40/1
15	Christian Klien	Red Bull-Cosworth	1	12 (1)	14 (1)	19	0	6	100/1
16	Jarno Trulli	Toyota	1	7 (1)	4 (1)	131	1	125	8/1
17	Ralf Schumacher	Toyota	1	4 (1)	7 (1)	129	6	263	20/1
18	Narain Karthikeyan	Jordan-Toyota	0	NA	NA	2	0	0	500/1
19	Tiago Monteiro	Jordan-Toyota	0	NA	NA	2	0	0	500/1
20	Christijan Albers	Minardi-Cosworth	0	NA	NA	2	0	0	2000/1
21	Patrick Friesacher	Minardi Cosworth	0	NA	NA	2	0	0	2000/1

FANCY A BET?

FOR THE first time in what feels like a lifetime, Michael Schumacher is not favourite for a grand prix, with Malaysia victor Fernando Alonso displacing him in top spot.

Giancarlo Fisichella still looks a good bet, while Williams' solid race performance from Malaysia suggests backing Mark Webber for a maiden podium could reap good dividends.

We've yet to see the best of the McLarens, with either driver worth a punt. But for extra value keep an eye on points finish odds – Christian Klien could offer excellent value for a third straight points finish.

Reckon these two get the hump when the F1 circus comes to town?



SAKHIR

57 LAPS

Circuit length

3.366 miles

Race distance

191.869 miles

2004 winner

M Schumacher 1h28m34.875s

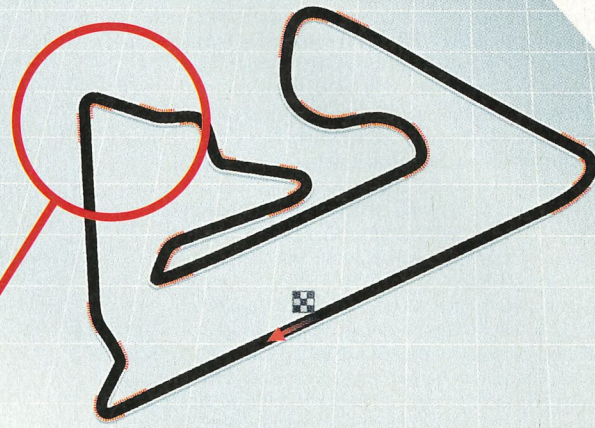
2004 fastest lap

M Schumacher 1m30.252s

2004 pole position

M Schumacher 1m30.139s

TEELAT



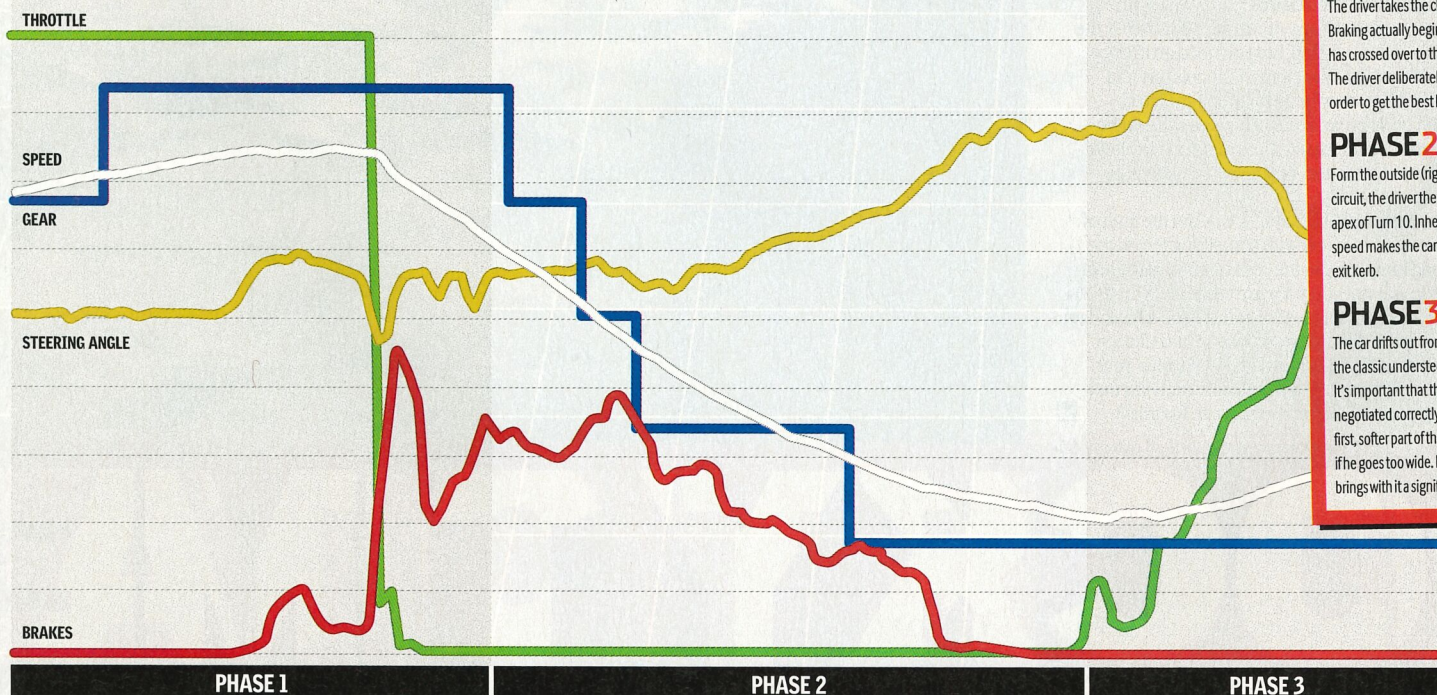
GRAPHIC: PAUL LAQUETTE

SEVEN VITAL SECONDS AT SAKHIR

"Although turns 9 and 10 appear to be two distinct corners on the circuit map, the drivers in fact treat them as one: the sequence is in reality a tight hairpin with a curving entry" **Pat Symonds, Renault F1's executive director, engineering**

Autosport NEW DATA

RENAULT F1 Team



PHASE 1

The driver takes the classic line through Turn 9. Braking actually begins on the exit after the car has crossed over to the outside of the circuit. The driver deliberately aims for the outside in order to get the best line for Turn 10.

PHASE 2

From the outside (right-hand side) of the circuit, the driver then aims at the left-hand apex of Turn 10. Inherent understeer at low speed makes the car slide out towards the exit kerb.

PHASE 3

The car drifts out from the apex of Turn 10 with the classic understeer/oversteer transition. It's important that the two-stage exit kerb is negotiated correctly. The driver drifts onto the first, softer part of the kerb which gets rougher if he goes too wide. Naturally, running too wide brings with it a significant loss of traction.

ALAN ELDRIDGE

Some bare facts for you. So far Citroën has 16 points in this year's world rally manufacturers' championship; after three rounds last season there were 30 points in the bank, while at the corresponding point two years ago (just three rounds into Citroën's first full campaign with the Xsara WRC) it had already bagged 39. Something appears to be amiss with what had been the World Rally Championship's most consistent of consistent teams.

There have been more worried faces among the chevroned ones than ever before. Even from Sébastien Loeb. The reigning world champion seems to have made more errors on the first three rallies of 2005 – actually, make that rounds two and three, Loeb doesn't do mistakes on the Monte Carlo – than he did all last season. Is he over-driving? Is he working the car harder? Is he feeling pressure from his rivals? Is he... what is he?

Agitated... no, make that perturbed. He's picking at the seal around the door of his Xsara WRC, thinking. Thinking.

"Of course, it's not so good," comes the answer. Worth waiting for? Hardly. Let's dig deeper. What about when his engine went pop in Sweden? Or the damaged motor which needed changing *before* the start of Mexico earlier this month.

Loeb continues, with a little encouragement: "We know now the engine works very well over one round, but the head gasket was not something which liked doing two rallies. The team has fixed it now. It, er, it shouldn't happen again."

In Mexico he complained that the rally didn't like him. If that was the case, then next month's Rally New Zealand isn't about to hold out an olive branch for the 31-year-old. He's been to Auckland twice, finished fourth on each occasion, but rarely has he looked so bemused by the Xsara's handling.

"We need something on the car for New Zealand," says Loeb, his voice trailing away at the thought of hustling the Citroën along Whaanga Coast. "We need some sort of evolution if we are going to get close to Petter [Solberg]."

It is both folly and deeply unfair to judge Citroën so early in 2005, even more so to trouble Loeb with these issues. He kept his part of the bargain by racking up a hat-trick of wins in Monte Carlo and fighting back to clinch fourth in Mexico. The Frenchman has managed 15 of the team's 16 points. The other came from new team-mate François Duval's 12th place in Sweden. However, it's fair to say the Versailles team hasn't been struggling to stem the flow of points from the 24-year-old. He crashed in Monte Carlo, dropped five minutes changing a wheel in Sweden and retired with an engine fault in Mexico.

It's the 'François factor' which the Belgian's former boss, Ford's Malcolm Wilson, sees as the early-season problem.

"There's no crisis for Citroën," says Wilson. "But what they have lost is their consistent second points-scorer. They don't have the same strength as when Carlos [Sainz] was with Sébastien. There is no doubt in my mind that Sébastien is the fastest driver in the championship, but you need an anchor man to get points if Loeb has problems. François has had problems, but I would say they've all been self-inflicted. When he was with us last year, François was convinced he could beat Sébastien, but he hasn't done much of that so far."

Put those points to Duval and, as you would expect, he goes on the defensive.

"Mexico was not my fault," he says. "It was not the fault of Citroën, either. The problem was with something inside the radiator which had happened in the construction of the part. Okay, Monte Carlo was not good, it wasn't the way I wanted to start with Citroën, but it happens. Sure, it has been a hard start for me, but it's also been difficult for Sébastien and Citroën."

It's worth remembering Duval turned down a four-year contract with Ford for 12 months in the Xsara knowing that Citroën is bidding the WRC *au revoir* this year. Regrets?



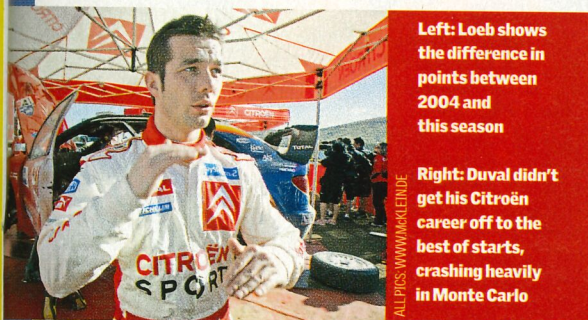
ROCKY TIMES

SPECIAL FEATURE The champion team has suffered a dip in form – but it won't bow out



S AT CITROËN

without a fight. By DAVID EVANS



Left: Loeb shows the difference in points between 2004 and this season

Right: Duval didn't get his Citroën career off to the best of starts, crashing heavily in Monte Carlo



Main: It's not been all blue skies this year. Loeb retired in Sweden

Above left: Duval won't let his head drop, but he's still after a first win

Above : Loeb's Mexican chances were hit by damper failure on leg one

Not as far as he's concerned. "I'm still young," he says. "I've got time. I am happy as I test the Citroën more and more. This team and the Xsara is very interesting for me."

He certainly does test more and more. Duval was in Spain the week before last, Sardinia last week and Britain this week. Citroën has always been among the WRC's most fervent testers, but even for them this is a busy period.

Part of the problem is that the team is being forced to play catch-up. The Xsara WRC was a well-fettled machine 12 months ago. With that in mind – and its future appearing certain in the sport – Citroën turned its attentions to the C4 WRC, the replacement for the Xsara which was due to break cover at the end of this season. The team took its eye off the ball in a calculated decision to accept a little short-term pain in return for the perceived long-term gain.

Ever since the PSA Group announced that both Peugeot and Citroën would be out of the WRC at the end of this year, Citroën has been doing its damndest to get the ship back on an even keel. Despite difficult times, the kind of inspiration that made the team great is still there.

Mexico was, is and always will be tough on brakes. Every car struggled with cooked pads and boiled fluid, except the Xsara; Citroën is the only team that homologated water-cooled brakes. On top of that, the French firm fitted fans inside the rear bumper to blow more cool air on to the rear discs.

It's nothing more than a coincidence that one of the most technically adept teams in the WRC has slipped from grace at the same time as technical director Jean-Claude Vaucard – a man Loeb's co-driver Daniel Elena calls "the big legend" – retired. For Vaucard, the work is done. The Xsara's four world titles in two years are testament to the man's ability. And his legacy will make Citroën even more determined to turn the situation around.

Right now, all eyes are fixed on the other side of the world. Will New Zealand be Citroën's nemesis, or the turning point?

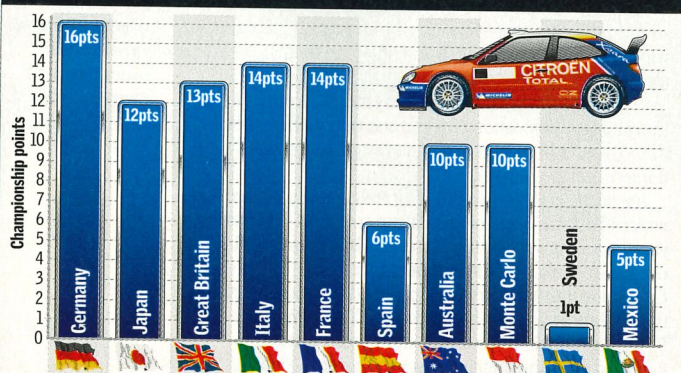
The last word has to go to team principal Guy Fréquelin.

"As you know, I am never confident before a rally," he says. "And this is the same for New Zealand. Everybody in the team has worked very hard. We will get it right."

It's impossible to ignore Fréquelin when he makes these kind of statements. When Citroën is not winning, he feels the loss more keenly than anybody. Getting his team out of its current fifth place in the manufacturers' standings transcends everything for him. If this blip defines the team's season, expect it to go down fighting. ❑

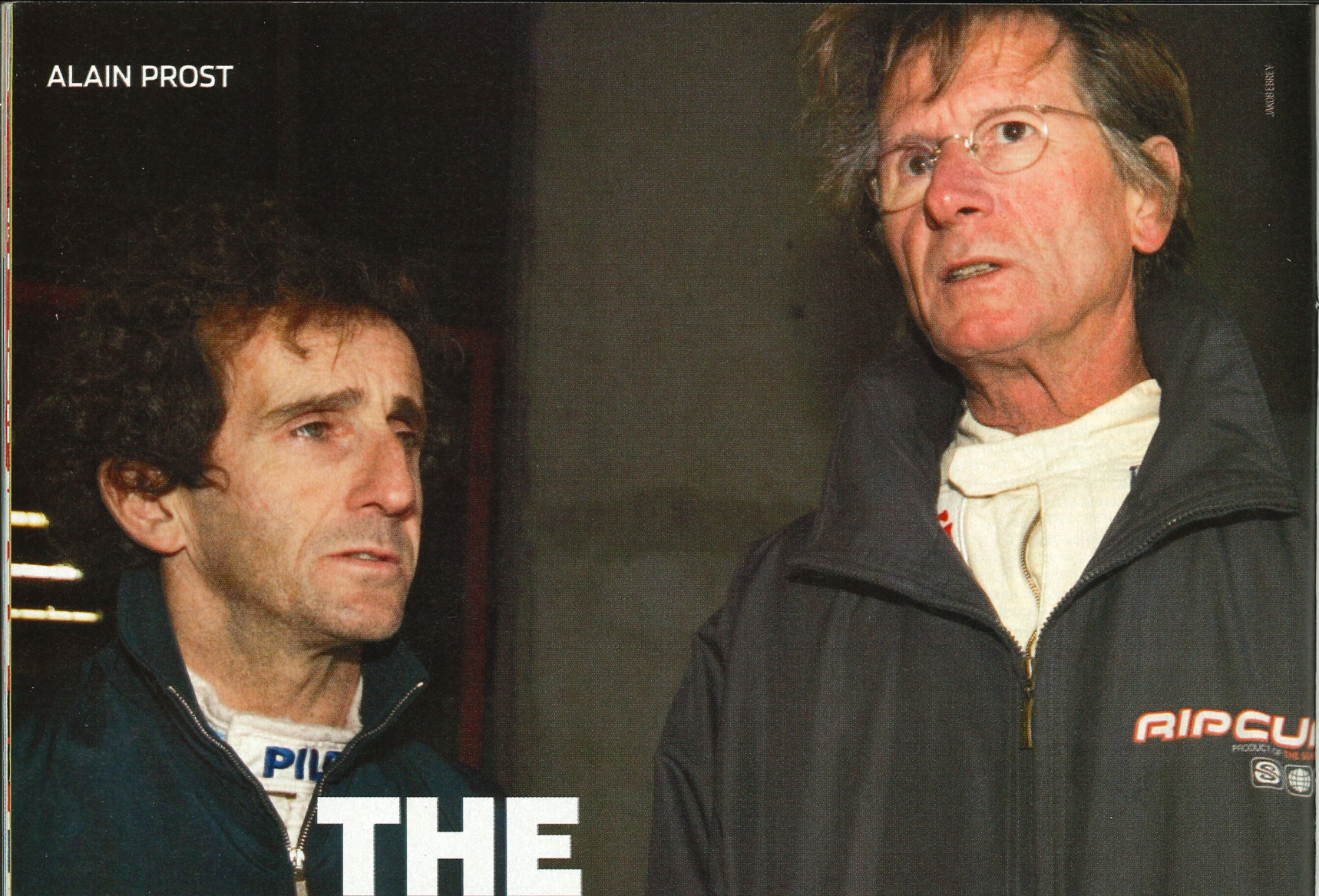
FALLEN STAR? CITROËN LOSING POINTS

**Autosport
NEW DATA**



Just 10 rallies ago Citroën was scoring top marks in the world championship, but the last few rounds have seen a drop in form for the Versailles-based team, especially in Sweden





THE PROFESSOR'S NEW FORMULA

INTERVIEW The pain of his final days in F1 behind him, Alain Prost is venturing back onto a race track. By CHARLES BRADLEY

Alain Prost has learned to take life as it comes. Not a bad plan, considering his early career goals were to play professional football or work in his father's furniture business. Instead, he had to settle for becoming arguably the greatest driver of a stellar generation. Four world championships, 51 race wins and 199 grand prix starts later, jeez, how the worlds of football and furniture missed out...

But the Prost story wasn't all plain sailing, of course. Stung by the collapse of his grand prix team at the end of 2002, *Le Professeur* recoiled from Formula 1. Once its favourite son, he had morphed into its black sheep and was unceremoniously cast out from the flock.

His motorsport therapy has been ice racing in the past couple of years, breathing in its hugely relaxed, oh-so-French atmosphere. The camaraderie among teams and drivers was there; so too were the mountains that he loves to conquer on his push-bike. Most importantly, the pressure had gone and he could take pleasure in the sport again.

"I'm enjoying it a lot," he says. "It's funny because a few years ago I really did not think about getting back behind the steering wheel. And now, although I won't do anything stupid, I'm enjoying it – like with the ice racing. The races are very short, and it's different to anything I've done before, so it's quite nice and suits me."

"I am taking motor racing, like my life, as it comes. If I'm spending my time among friends and nice people, then that's okay. Otherwise, I'm not interested. I don't want things to get too serious."

Ice racing is all very well, but asphalt was the surface on which Prost was born to race. After a couple of GT tests last year, including a run in the Maserati MC12 supercar, he has decided to make some star appearances in the French GT Championship in a Chrysler Viper. And to make it even more mouth-watering, his partners will be Jean-Pierre Jabouille – the first man to win an F1 race in a turbo-powered car – and later in the season his son, Nicolas.

"It was the idea of a friend of mine [Luc Marchetti] who is managing the project," says Prost. "I tested a Viper with my son in Dijon last year, and Luc asked me if I wanted to do

Main: Prost will be joined by old pal Jabouille (right) in selected rounds of this year's French GT Championship

three or four races with the Exagon Racing team. My son is racing in the same package in Formula Renault, so I said, 'Why not?' I can do some races and spend time with my son, watching him race too.

"Everything has come together very late, but we're doing this for fun. I like the car; it's very heavy, not like a single-seater at all, but it has a good engine, with lots of power and torque, and it's good to drive. I will see if I enjoy racing it."

Prost's plans are fluid at the moment, a lot perhaps depending on how his role as a consultant to the Grand Prix World Championship (GPWC) develops, but so far his programme will include races at Nogaro and Ledenon at the start of the season and the final two rounds at Le Mans and Magny-Cours.

"The initial idea was to race with Nicolas, and that is what I will do in one or maybe both of the last two races," Prost explains. "He wants to concentrate on French and European Formula Renault, so he cannot do that and drive in GTs with me, but we'll see how it goes."

"We are late with the car, we are not going to be in good shape, especially for the first race, so we're not expecting to win or anything. I'm 50 [years old] this year and I didn't want a celebration but instead I wanted to go back to the classic French circuits to meet the people and have a nice time."

He can also share some good times with his old pal Jabouille. Their F1 careers only just crossed over, before Jean-Pierre bowed out due to a serious leg injury in 1981, but they have been thrown together in highly unusual circumstances. Could it really be that Jabouille got the nod because he's a sexagenarian and his age will negate a 20-second pitstop penalty?

"Yes, it's true!" laughs Prost. "The team had to explain the regulations to me, and because he's over 60 it is an advantage for us, so that's why he will drive. It's funny, but he's a good friend of mine, so I look forward to racing with him a lot."

Jabouille, who is used to sharing a car with a world champion after partnering Keke Rosberg in Peugeot sportscars in 1990, also finds the situation amusing, and quips: "Our problem is that we have a new team with a

new car but very old drivers!"

Joking aside, Prost is also planning a return to single-seaters after accepting an offer to contest the inaugural Grand Prix Masters race at Kyalami later this year, the precursor to the series' first full season in 2006.

"I should be there in the first race, because it is in November, and then I will see how it goes," he says. "It depends a lot on what I am doing next year, in terms of my calendar. I think it's a good idea. People like the nostalgia of old drivers, as long as it is done in the right way."

But what about F1? Now that wounds have healed, can he continue to stay away?

"You never know in life," he shrugs. "My mind is always open, but I can't talk about that at the moment because of my role with the GPWC. I have to stay in the background."

Prost appears on the verge of elaborating (he is believed to be working on the definition of the GPWC regulations, both technical and sporting, and which circuits it should use) but stops himself and apologises that he can't say more.

That's okay, Alain. You've got to take life as it comes, after all. ☐

Above: The chance to race with son Nicolas tempted Prost back onto the race track

Below: Prost and Jabouille were back in action at Magny-Cours last week in the Viper



>> ACES HIGH

HOW PROST AND JABOUILLE HAVE EACH MADE THEIR MARK



1979

Jabouille becomes the first man to win a grand prix in a turbo-powered car in his Renault



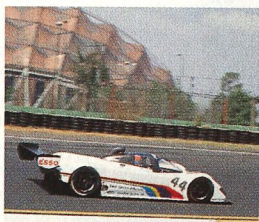
1981

Dijon two years later, and Prost wins the first of his 51 grand prix victories, also with Renault



1986

After a mega battle, Prost lands his second F1 world title. Two more would follow



1990

Jabouille shares Peugeot sportscar with Rosberg and forges strong link with brand



1994

With Jabouille now at Peugeot Sport's helm, Prost tests its engines as part of his consultancy role with McLaren



THE BRITS SEEKING WORLD DOMINATION

James Thompson and Andy Priaulx on their WTCC hopes. By GARY WATKINS

■ **Being world champion is every young racing driver's dream. How does it feel to get the chance to shoot for that title in touring cars?**

Andy Priaulx: Coming up through the ranks in single-seaters, Formula 1 is what you dream of. That dream didn't happen, so it's great to get the chance in tin-tops.

James Thompson: I wanted to be World Rally Champion, because my family background in motorsport is in rallying. Now I am a touring car driver I want to race at the highest possible level in that discipline. I did that in the British Touring Car Championship in the '90s, but right now this series is the best. The world title merely adds to that.

■ **And racing on some great circuits in exotic locations?**

AP: I drove into Monza the other day and was bowled over by the place, even though I must have been there a dozen times. It has an atmosphere all of its own and it's an amazing track. How many circuits are there in Britain where you need to get a slipstream to have a good lap time?

JT: I look at it from an Air Miles point of view. With all those flights I'm going to have a great holiday at the end of the year.

■ **Do you agree it is more of a challenge, James?**

JT: After winning the BTCC two years out of three I needed to do something else. I'd challenged myself long enough in Britain.

AP: And it's great that two Brits have got the chance to win races at this level, because a few years ago that wouldn't have happened unless your name ended in an 'i'.

■ **James, do you have regrets that you never won the BTCC during the Super Touring era?**

JT: It frustrates me. So many times I was tipped to win the title before the start of the season. I always won a lot of races, but quite often I underachieved as far as the championship went.

■ **Do you think racing on a world stage help bring your names to a wider audience?**

JT: All I want from my career in terms of accolades is to be able to walk into a room of racing people and for them to think, 'He can pedal a bit'. I'm not interested in fame, although it would be nice to have some good television. That's one of the down sides of leaving the BTCC. It has a fantastic live package at the moment.

AP: It would be great if we had terrestrial TV. It would be a great show because there would be a tremendous focus on the Brits - Thommo, Robert Huff and myself - in among a sea of international superstars.

■ **Can anyone win the WTCC this year?**

JT: It's honours even between the top three manufacturers - BMW, Alfa Romeo and SEAT - at the moment. It may sound corny, but it really is too close to call.

AP: I reckon there are 10 drivers who could win it.

■ **The new system of success ballast links weight carried to a driver's points total, so you will all be carrying more lead than ever at the end of the year. How is this going to affect the championship battle?**

AP: It is going to be horrible. We are going to be fighting for seventh, eighth or worse, looking like has-beens. To be successful you are going to require a lot of grit and determination and forget about your ego.

JT: We'd all like to start from pole and make the race look dull, but that's not what created the WTCC. This will make for some great racing, just like success ballast and reverse grids did in the BTCC. The racing in Britain over the past couple of years have been the best ever, and that includes the mid-'90s heyday.

■ **How do you rate your own chances going into the season?**

AP: I haven't been particularly impressive in pre-season testing, though sometimes I tend to look at things negatively.

JT: But mate, form is temporary, class is permanent.

AP: Like last year, my championship will be about making sure I win races when my car is really good, relying on the reverse grid a bit and then seeing where I am at the end of the year.

JT: I ain't here to make up the numbers or to finish second but I have to be realistic about the timescale.

■ **Any predictions for where you will finish in the championship?**

JT: I wouldn't be foolish enough to try. I don't think we can even start guessing until two-thirds of the way through the season.

AP: Just like last year, I've got no idea.

■ **You're on the world stage, but do you feel it necessary to bring a little bit of Britain to the races with you?**

AP: I bring my motorhome to most of the races and my family comes along, which helps relax me.

JT: I have to bring my own teabags, because my lot seem to exist on caffeine and nicotine. I have a supply of Yorkshire Tea and Marmite.

■ **What do the Italians make of Marmite?**

JT: They definitely hate it. ☹

● **WTCC teams and drivers rated, p54**

Main: Thompson and Priaulx have British and European titles respectively; now they're chasing the world crown

Below: Plato will strengthen the British contingent at three WTCC rounds in a SEAT



JASON PLATO

GOING FOR A TRIPLE WHAMMY

JASON PLATO is another British driver with the possibility of winning races in the new World Touring Car Championship. Few would bet against Priaulx and Thompson scoring victories, though the odds on the SEAT BTCC driver making it into the winner's circle are much longer.

That's to take nothing away from Plato's undoubted talents,

or the ever-improving SEAT Toledo Cupra R. Rather, it's that the 37-year-old will be contesting only three WTCC rounds in a fourth works-run car. The Briton is being brought in for Silverstone, Imola and Spa, the races that don't clash with his domestic campaign, not only to bolster the Spanish points-scoring chances but also to further speed up development of the Toledo.

"This is good for SEAT in the BTCC and good for SEAT in the WTCC," he says. "I will be good to bring a bit more brain power to the development of the car. I'm sure that's what SEAT is thinking."

Plato insists that he is going into his WTCC events with the aim of winning, though it is more likely that he is going to have to wait until a much-rumoured

switch of programmes for that.

Plato won't be drawn on that one. "I will race wherever SEAT wants me to race," he says. "I'd love to race in the WTCC. There are a lot of recognised touring car drivers out there who I would love to beat."

"On the other hand I love racing in Britain. My dream would be to do both. I want to be like a NASCAR driver and race every weekend."



BMW

DID BMW have an edge over arch-rivals Alfa Romeo last year on the way to drivers' and manufacturers' titles? Sometimes you'd have thought so, on others that the red cars appeared to have the edge. Pre-season testing suggests little has changed: the Bimmers pip the red cars one week and then get blown away the next. How much development has gone into the six-cylinder 320i for its final season isn't clear. Some quarters of the BMW camp say not enough, especially with new brake regs favouring its front-wheel-drive rivals.



1
ANDY PRIAULX
BMW TEAM UK
(Racing Bart Mampaey)

Priaulx's rise and rise as a touring car driver made him European champ last year. He'll probably have to improve again to land the world title, though. Remember, this is still only his fourth season of tin-tops. The task keeps getting tougher, but don't bet against the Brit.



42
JÖRG MÜLLER (D)
BMW TEAM GERMANY
(Schnitzer)

Big year for a driver who lost out to his team-mate in the battle of the Müllers at Schnitzer in 2004. Jörg took longer to adjust to Super 2000 competition than his team-mate, came on strong in '03 and then lost his way last year. Expect a resurgence in '05.



43
DIRK MÜLLER (D)
BMW TEAM GERMANY
(Schnitzer)

How the younger of the unrelated Müllers lost last year's European Touring Car Championship crown remains a mystery. That disastrous finale in Dubai will always take the shine off a strong season during which he led the Schnitzer team's challenge. Needs to bounce back with an early win or two.



4
ALESSANDRO ZANARDI (I)
BMW TEAM ITALY SPAIN
(Ravaglia Motorsport)

The former Champ Car superstar didn't return to the cockpit to endure the kind of disappointment that blighted his 2004 season. Revisions to both the electronics that allow him to drive a racing car and his prosthetic right leg, which he uses to brake, promise to move him up the grid.



5
ANTONIO GARCIA (E)
BMW TEAM ITALY SPAIN
(Ravaglia Motorsport)

The Spaniard appeared on the verge of a first touring car win by the end of 2003, yet never came close last year. Sure, Ravaglia didn't have the best of seasons, but Garcia's head also dropped. If driver and team hit form at the same time, they must surely be winners.

ALFA ROMEO

Alfa Romeo remains the benchmark team as the European Touring Car Championship transforms into the World Touring Car Championship for the new season. While BMW still has its bogey circuits, you'd never bet against a win by one of the Italian cars. What's more, there's now four of them at every round: the Autodelta team of Tarquini, Giovanardi and Farfus has bolstered its challenge with the world class talents of double British champion



2
GABRIELE TARQUINI (I)
ALFA ROMEO RACING TEAM
(Autodelta)

With a little less misfortune, Tarquini could be heading into the WTCC as a two-time ETCC champion. The 2003 title winner may be 43 this year, but there is no reason to suggest that he is at anything other than the peak of his powers. A potential champion.



3
JAMES THOMPSON (GB)
ALFA ROMEO RACING TEAM
(Autodelta)

Thompson arrives in the WTCC not only as reigning British champion, but also as a race winner in the ETCC. That means he not only has the speed but also the experience to make an immediate impact in his first season away from Britain. A potential champion? Why not?



6
FABRIZIO GIOVANARDI (I)
ALFA ROMEO RACING TEAM
(Autodelta)

The multiple touring car champion certainly looked happier back in the Alfa camp after a disastrous year with BMW in 2003, but he didn't return the same driver who left. Needs to get the better of both Tarquini and Thompson this year if he is to maintain his reputation as a tin-top great.



7
AUGUSTO FARFUS (BR)
ALFA ROMEO RACING TEAM
(Autodelta)

This talented Brazilian never got a fair crack of the whip in his maiden year of tin-tops in 2004. Frequently asked to act as rear gunner for his team-mates, he seldom got the chance to shine. If politics allow, he has the pace, if not the experience, to mount a championship challenge.

SEAT

Apodium in its first year, a win in its second, what price a championship for SEAT in its third season up against BMW and Alfa? On the basis of pre-season testing, the Toledo Cupra R finally looks like a car that can challenge for victory week in week out through the summer, even if its engine still lacks grunt. The Spanish marque's drivers are definitely going to finish with a bagful of wins come November, but a genuine shot at the championship could be thwarted by marketing considerations. A mid-season change of car, to the new Leon hatch, will surely interrupt any title push.



8
RICKARD RYDELL (S)
SEAT SPORT

No one was surprised when Rydell took SEAT's maiden victory at this level last year. The former British Touring Car Champion may have made a slow start to 2005, but he quickly got the better of his team-mates to become the man to watch at the Spanish manufacturer. A dark horse for the title.



9
JORDI GENÉ (E)
SEAT SPORT

Gené proved he was much more than a token Spaniard in SEAT's line-up last year after a disappointing debut season with the marque in 2003. Briefly looked like becoming unofficial team leader, only for Rydell to get his act in gear. It's difficult to see him getting back on terms.



10
PETER TERTING (D)
SEAT SPORT

The giant jump from the one-make Volkswagen Lupo series in Germany to the DTM proved too much for Terting. After a rebuilding year in SEAT's tin-top cup, he's back in the international arena and testing suggests he is going to be a worthy addition to the SEAT Sport line-up.

WTC

Who's driving for wh



FORD

Ford's decision to sign up was the final piece in the jigsaw in the recreation of the WTCC, yet its commitment to the series is well below the other players and its Focus Super 2000 racers look likely



14
THOMAS KLENKE (D)
FORD

How do you assess the talents of this 38-year-old, a graduate of the German one-make scene. Sure, he's been winning in German Super Production circles since the late 1990s and won the title in 2002, but the WTCC is another league altogether. But he is familiar with Hotfiel and the Focus.

CHEVROLET

One of the most famous names in motor racing in union with one of the best teams in touring cars sounds like a story book marriage. Yet the world shouldn't expect a fairy tale beginning to the new relationship – the WTCC is too competitive for that. Pre-season testing suggests RML's Lacettis are not even in the ballpark, so modest results are to be expected early on. Expect the Chevys to work their way towards the front through the season, RML's expertise and the biggest budget in the championship should see to that. An end-of-season victory would still be a surprise, though.



21
ROBERT HUFF (GB)
CHEVROLET

He may have been a race winner in last year's BTCC but it remains difficult to assess a driver who is entering only his second season as a touring car professional. If confidence and application have anything to do with it, Huff will be a success at Chevrolet. Has a chance to build a long-term future.



Raceguide

COLLECTORS' EDITION

SEAT

WITH THIS WEEK'S Autosport

Donington Park • April 9/10 2005
Rounds 1/2/3



SEAT
SPORT UK
BTCC
CHALLENGE



SEAT CUPRA
CHAMPIONSHIP



SEAT
auto emoción

James Pickford – from Cupra king to budding BTCC star

Three race wins, nine podiums, six fastest laps, six poles and finishing 11 out of the 12 rounds in the top four ensured James was a worthy 2004 SEAT Cupra Champion. In a very closely fought series, the 25-year old Macclesfield driver always looked in complete control of his destiny. Today James looks every bit a works Touring Car driver. Racing is what he does best, and he considers the BTCC his spiritual home. He may not make his BTCC debut until April 10, but he's been preparing for that opening race for most of his life. Even when he didn't compete in 2002, he never lost faith that one day he'd be a professional racing driver. Cool, focused and more determined than a dog with a t-bone steak, there is little doubt James will do well in 2005.

AUTOGRAPH

Luke Hines – raring to go in SEAT's three-pronged attack

Even though he began what looked like a textbook career path to Formula 1, Luke always wanted to race Touring Cars. The Zip Young Guns graduate became British Junior Yamaha Champion in 1995 and then raced karts all over the world before swapping to single-seaters and winning the Southern Formula Ford title in 2002. A Touring Car test at the end of that year saw Luke's tin-top career move up a gear, and in 2003 he became BTCC Production Class Champion at his first attempt. In 2004 he won two BTCC races outright with VX Racing, and believes the SEAT Toledo Cupra suits his driving style. "I want to try and help SEAT win the Manufacturers' title and hopefully score loads more race wins myself," says the 22-year old Essex driver. Enough said.



SEAT

SO MUCH MORE THAN JUST MUSCLE...

You never win by just going fast. SEAT's British Touring Car stars Jason Plato, James Pickford and Luke Hines know that.

To make every driver a winner on the road you need the whole performance package of advanced drive technology, active safety systems, pin-point handling and extreme stability under pressure.

The SEAT Leon Cupra R is SEAT's high performance model and has all those features. Standard in the Cupra R is the DSR system (Dynamic Steering Response) and is at the heart of SEAT's sport driving philosophy.

It turns the steering, brakes, transmission and chassis into a single, responsive unit that transforms your every intention into instant, precise control. It's the race experience you can drive to work.

SEAT's Traction Control System (TCS) lets you convert every bit of horsepower into maximum motion. With engines of the Leon's power, technology like TCS comes in to stop the wheels spinning and wasting power when you put your foot down.

ESP (Electronic Stability Programme) comes in when you're giving it a little more through the curves or when the conditions become more challenging. It monitors information from the steering wheel, tyres, brakes and accelerator and makes any adjustments necessary to make sure you always hug a perfect line. It provides a safer, smoother and controlled drive.

Selective Pump Technology turns every drop of fuel into pure horsepower and is standard kit on SEAT TDI diesel engines. It uses electronically controlled pumps on each cylinder to balance the injection, improve power, optimise fuel consumption and provide silky smooth running of the engine.

The Leon offers the cream of the road-eating crop in high-performance engines, with petrol models up to the mighty 225bhp Cupra R and a range of diesels that provide enough response, acceleration and sheer guts to leave them all gasping at the lights.

There's a Leon to match every pocket and preferences and if you're buying a new Leon Cupra R you can take advantage of SEAT's exciting Motorsport package.

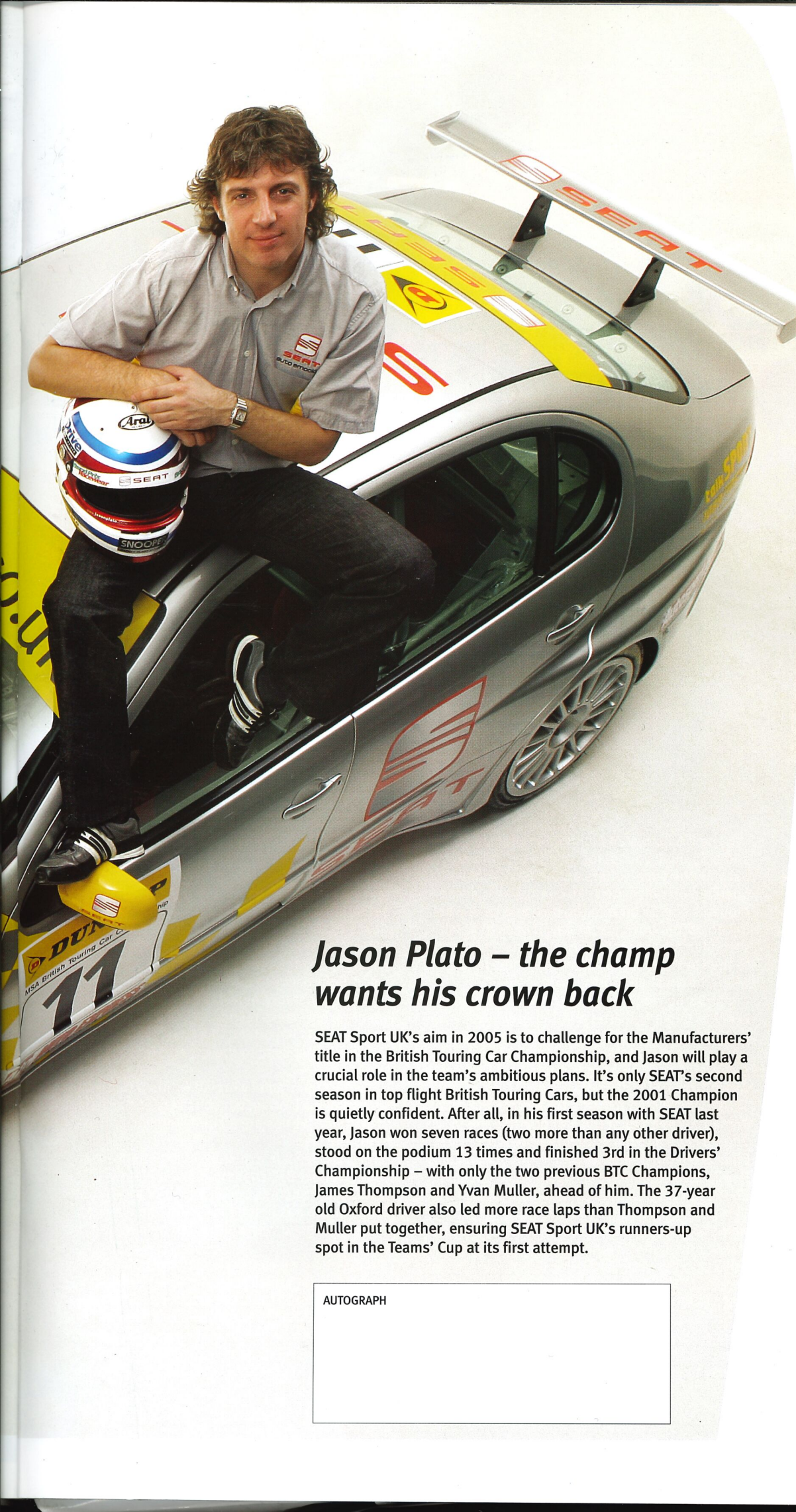
To find out read about this exciting deal read on in this collectors' programme or visit our website at

www.seat.co.uk

Jason Plato – the champ wants his crown back

SEAT Sport UK's aim in 2005 is to challenge for the Manufacturers' title in the British Touring Car Championship, and Jason will play a crucial role in the team's ambitious plans. It's only SEAT's second season in top flight British Touring Cars, but the 2001 Champion is quietly confident. After all, in his first season with SEAT last year, Jason won seven races (two more than any other driver), stood on the podium 13 times and finished 3rd in the Drivers' Championship – with only the two previous BTC Champions, James Thompson and Yvan Muller, ahead of him. The 37-year old Oxford driver also led more race laps than Thompson and Muller put together, ensuring SEAT Sport UK's runners-up spot in the Teams' Cup at its first attempt.

AUTOGRAPH





Luke Hines is a 22-year-old with spiky hair and many talents, but if it wasn't his determination and willpower he could be considered lucky to be alive.

At the age of two he was diagnosed with severe glue ear and was only saved from brain damage by emergency surgery to remove two pints of fluid.

Then as a six-year-old a sit-on mower accident resulted in his lower left leg being nearly completely severed. Luke lost two and a half litres of blood and almost died on his way to hospital. Amputation looked the only option, but the leg was saved – just. After 16 operations and several months in hospital Luke returned home.

By 1992 Luke's left leg was almost as strong as his right leg and he had his first kart race at Buckmore Park. He won his first race aged nine and a glittering motorsport career looked assured – but healthwise Luke wasn't out of the woods. At 12, he was diagnosed with Myalgic Encephalitis (ME). More specialist treatment cured his illness.

Yet despite all his misfortune, Luke still considers himself lucky. His step-sister Kelly died of cancer when she was 13 years old and his father has overcome stomach cancer. Life has already taught him to enjoy each day.

Luke became part of his father's Zip Young Guns Racing Team and finished runner-up in the Cadet Kart Championship in 1994 before winning the British Junior Yamaha Championship a year later. Luke also won the Yamaha Super Prix.

At the FIA European Junior Championship Luke and a Spanish youngster called Fernando Alonso became the pace-setters. In the final, Alonso qualified on pole with Luke alongside in second. Alonso's engine blew in the race and Luke was forced off the track, yet he raced back to finish second in a Top Kart factory machine. Luke went to the FIA World Junior Championships in Italy, where he finished fourth in the final.

In 1998 he won the CIK European Championship event at Imola and after another great year finished sixth in the FIA European Championship. Luke moved to single-seaters in 2003 and dominated the Southern Formula Ford Champion with 10 race wins, 10 poles and 10 fastest laps.

Luke was invited to test a GA Motorsport Alfa Romeo Touring Car at the end of 2002 and in 2003 Luke made his British Touring Car Championship debut, driving a Production Class Honda Civic R. In his first season Luke became Champion with 18 straight podium results.

He was approached by VX Racing to drive a works Astra Coupe in the 2004 BTCC. His teammates were James Thompson and Yvan Muller – childhood heroes – and twice during the season he beat them winning two Touring Car races in his first season racing in the BTCC.

This season Luke has signed for SEAT. The team's culture fits in well with his own values. "I'm really happy at SEAT," Luke says. "Everyone is easy to get along with. They are like one big

family. Everyone is very close and very passionate about their racing.

"What I also appreciate is that the team has taken a lot of pressure off me so I can relax and get on with the job."

Luke expects this season to be a hard-fought contest between SEAT and his former team at VX Racing. "Oh, definitely," he says. "It's going to be a dog-fight between us."

With the first race only days away Luke has spent recent weeks testing. "It's been going really well, which is important," he says. "It has given me time to get used to the car and find the right set-up."

"Jason, James and I were all within a tenth of a second of each other, which is very encouraging. In fact, our set-ups are all quite similar, which helps the team."

The SEAT team is a mixture of experience and youth. Former BTC champion Jason Plato is the team leader and has become a bit of a mentor for Luke. "Jason has helped me a lot," he explains. "He is very good with set-up and he's willing to try things."

In the end it all comes down to results on the track and with an enthusiastic, level-headed young gun in the team in Luke Hines, SEAT has an outstanding chance to surpass its efforts of 2004.

"It's going to be an interesting year and my aim is to help SEAT win the manufacturers' title and to finish in the top three in the points."

COOL HAND LUKE PREPARES FOR BATTLE



SEAT

DONINGTON TIMETABLE

Saturday, April 9

**09.05-09.25 SEAT Cupra Championship
qualifying**

**09.40-10.20 British Touring Car
Championship free practice**

10.35-10.55 Formula Renault UK qualifying

11.10 -11.30 Formula BMW UK qualifying

11.45-12.05 ELF Renault Clio Cup qualifying

**12.20-13.00 British Touring Car
Championship free practice**

14.00-14.20 Porsche Carrera Cup qualifying

**14.35-14.55 SEAT Cupra Championship
qualifying**

15.10-15.30 Formula Renault UK qualifying

**15.45-16.15 British Touring Car
Championship qualifying**

16.30-16.50 Formula BMW UK qualifying

17.00 ELF Renault Clio Cup race –
16 laps

Sunday, April 10

09.10 Porsche Carrera Cup race – 15 laps

09.50 Race Formula Renault UK race –
16 laps

10.30 Formula BMW UK race – 15 laps

**11.20 British Touring Car Championship
race – 16 laps**

**12.00 SEAT Cupra Championship race –
14 laps**

**13.40 British Touring Car Championship
race – 16 laps**

14.25 ELF Renault Clio Cup race – 14 laps

15.05 Porsche Carrera Cup race – 15 laps

15.45 Formula Renault UK race – 16 laps

**16.40 British Touring Car Championship
race – 16 laps**

17.20 Formula BMW UK race – 15 laps

**18.00 SEAT Cupra Championship race –
14 laps**



AUTOGRAPH

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT FOR SEAT'S NEW CUPRA LINE-UP

After two great seasons produced two great champions in Rob Huff and James Pickford, there is an exciting new look to the SEAT Cupra Championship in 2005.

The series has been expanded to 18 rounds, all the races will be on the TOCA Support card and individual teams will run the turbocharged Leon Cupra Rs to a new set of sporting and technical regulations.

The series will be faster and more competitive than ever before, which is really something to look forward to.

One of the drivers likely to feature prominently in 2005 is **Tom Boardman**. Tom finished third overall to Pickford last

season after a nail-biting finale at Donington Park. Tom had a fine season, recording three race wins – the last of which kept his chances of winning the 2004 title alive going into the final race. His choice of using wet racing tyres rather than slicks cost him dear, however, dropping him to the back of the pack. Tom and his Triple R team will be as determined as the other competitors to win the championship this year.

Former BTCC Independents' Cup star **Carl Breeze** will be one of Boardman's chief rivals, contesting this year's series with Barwell Motorsport, having switched to tin-tops after winning the Formula Renault UK Championship in 2001. Carl will be joined at Barwell by **Alan**

Blencowe. Alan had two class wins in the Britcar Endurance series last year, having raced in the BTC Production class for two seasons, finishing runner-up in 2003 to SEAT BTCC star Luke Hines.

Former Vectra and Vento Racing Champion **Dave Pinkey** has swapped his Porsche Carrera Cup car for a front-wheel-drive Leon Cupra R with Motorbase Performance and will be sure to be one of the stars of the series.

Brothers **Adrian and Ian Churchill** are certain to be racing wheel-to-wheel for family-run Churchill Motorsport having both won the Super Coupe Cup and the Rover Turbo Championship.

Scotsman **Jonathan Young** will be aiming to equal his feat of breaking the lap record at every track he raced at in the European Super Touring Challenge in his SRE Motorsport-run SEAT.

Surrey-based **Mike Doble** comes from racing V6-powered cars in the VSR series to drive for his own Doble Motorsport team, while 19-year-old **Harry Vaulkhard**, racing for JS Motorsport – who includes 'roof jumping' as one of his favourite pastimes – joins the fray in the Cupra Championship from a background in motocross.

Mark Cole, who will drive for Team Parker Racing, raced against F1 star David Coulthard back in 1989 in Formula Ford before competing in many different saloon car series culminating in him becoming Porsche Carrera Cup Champion in 2003.

Chris Eggington scored four wins and seven poles in the Porsche Club Championship last year and races for Team GVR in the SEAT Cupra Championship.

Mat Jackson teams up with double British Touring Car Champion Chris Hodgetts and SpeedEquipe Motorsport. It will be the 23-year-old Rockingham circuit driving instructor's first full season since finishing fourth in the BTC Production Cup class in 2001.





BE PART OF THE ACTION IN A SEAT LEON CUPRA R

It's well worth buying SEAT Leon Cupra R. We take it as read that all new owners will be more than satisfied with the high-performance driving experience but if you take delivery of a new Cupra R before June 30, 2005 you will qualify for SEAT's fantastic motorsport package.

New owners receive two SEAT Sport race jackets they can wear at an exclusive SEAT track day and a VIP day at the British Touring Car Championship as a guest of SEAT UK.

SEAT's track days at Prodrive live! near Kenilworth in Warwickshire have been specifically designed to test your driving skills, as well as learning new ones and – most importantly of all – having a day that will live long in the memory.

SEAT provides the cars and expert driving instructors, with each session lasting for about three hours and including lunch.

Drivers participate in auto tests, car control tests, ABS tests and circuit driving skills. Not only that but one of SEAT's experienced racing drivers will take you on a high-speed passenger ride round the circuit.

For all those who have never experienced this before it is highly recommended and an experience not to be missed.

SEAT TRACK DAYS

April 1, May 6, June 10, July 1, August 19, September 23

Having experienced first-hand what it's like to drive around a circuit in a Cupra R, come and see how the experts do it in the BTCC as a guest of SEAT.

SEAT Sport UK finished its first season in the BTCC as runner-up in the teams' championship and won nine races and had 20 podium finishes in the 30-race series – a remarkable achievement.

Jason Plato won seven races in 2004 and secured third place in the drivers' championship.

In 2005 Jason is joined by 2004 SEAT Cupra Champion James Pickford and two-times BTCC race winner Luke Hines in a three-pronged attack on the most important motorsport series in Britain.

As a new Cupra owner you could be there to witness their BTCC challenge as a guest in the SEAT Hospitality area for a VIP day that brings you really close to all the action. You and a friend will truly enjoy the SEAT Sport experience.

2005 BTCC RACE DAYS

Donington Park	April 10
Thruxton	May 1
Brands Hatch	June 5
Oulton Park	June 19
Croft	July 17
Mondello	July 24
Snetterton	August 7
Knockhill	August 28
Silverstone	September 18
Brands Hatch	October 2



SEAT

PREPARING FOR WORLD DOMINATION

SEAT Sport will compete in the new FIA World Touring Car Championship this year with an exciting three-car team aiming to build upon its race-winning ETCC campaign last season. The Barcelona-based team scored its first ETCC win at Oschersleben last year and will compete in the inaugural WTCC with a trio of Toledo Cupras.

They will be driven by Swedish ace and 1998 BTC Champion Rickard Rydell, Spanish star Jordi Gené and 20-year old German WTCC newcomer Peter Terting. Peter has come from the German SEAT Cupra 'Supercopa' Championship, following Rob Huff through the SEAT racing ranks and into the WTCC.

SEAT enter the season with confidence high after impressive times during pre-season testing at Magny-Cours and Silverstone – two of the venues on the WTCC calendar. Rydell topped the times at Magny-Cours, three-tenths faster than former ETC Champion Fabrizio Giovanardi in an Alfa Romeo.

The championship makes its only visit to Britain at Silverstone on May 15.

2005 FIA WTCC CHAMPIONSHIP

Monza	April 9/10
Magny-Cours	April 30/May 1
Silverstone	May 14/15
Imola	May 28/29
Mexico	June 25/26
Spa	July 29/30 (Fri/Sat)
Oschersleben	August 27/28
Istanbul	September 17/18
Valencia	October 1/2
Macau	November 19/20



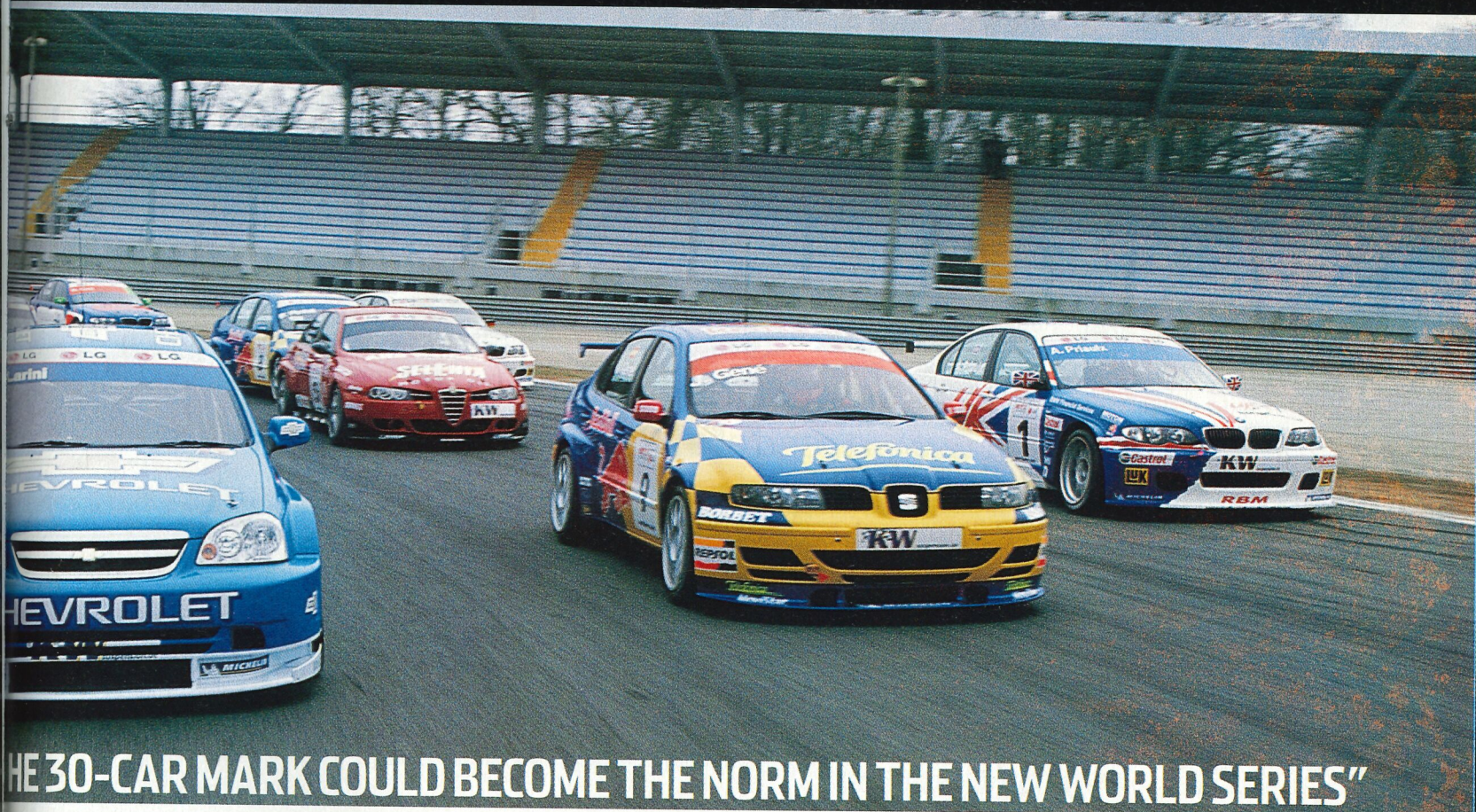
For more information on SEAT UK's 2005 motorsport campaign visit our website at

www.seat.co.uk



C TEAM BY TEAM

in the world's premier tin-top series? GARY WATKINS guides you around the squads



THE 30-CAR MARK COULD BECOME THE NORM IN THE NEW WORLD SERIES"

to be mixing it with the privateers rather than their manufacturer rivals. This is a low-key entry into the series by Ford and Hotfiel Sport, its partner in the German Super Production ranks for the past four years. Development of the ST170 has been funded by Ford, but the team has had to come up with its own running budget. Enough said.



15
THOMAS JÄGER (D)
FORD

This former DTM driver is back in the international arena after a year away, but not at the level to which he was accustomed. Hotfiel Sport is hardly AMG whichever way you look at it. Jäger's short-term goal can only be to get the better of his team-mate.

HONDA

You'd never know it looking at them, but there's no factory backing for the Honda Accord Euro Rs competing in the WTCC this season. Although JAS Motorsport lacks the budget of the manufacturer



26
ROBERTO COLCIAGO (I)
JAS MOTORSPORT

A big year for the former Audi star, a winner in Europe, Italy and Sweden with the German marque. Colciago needs to impress after a disappointing solo season in the ETCC with Alfa Romeo back in 2003, otherwise it could be back to the scrapheap.

teams, it doesn't lack the expertise or commitment required to win at this level. The Italian squad knows that this is its big chance to impress the Honda hierarchy, which appears close to committing to the WTCC and has stepped up its effort accordingly. You don't sign Roberto Colciago if you are only on the grid to make up the numbers.



27
ADRIANO DE MICHELI (I)
JAS MOTORSPORT

Little is expected of the reigning Italian Super Production champion, who has bought his way into the JAS line-up. If he starts beating Colciago, we'll be touting him as a star of the future. If not, he'll never break free of the pay-driver mould.



22
NICOLA LARINI (I)
CHEVROLET

Larini is another old-timer returning to the big stage after time away, so the intra-team battle with Menu at Chevrolet will be fascinating. Larini knows the Super 2000 formula, so must have something of a head start, but how long will a driver who played second fiddle to Giovanardi at Alfa keep that lead?



23
ALAIN MENU (CH)
CHEVROLET

One of the world's top drivers of the Super Touring era is back in a front-wheel-drive tin-top after four years away. Menu might not have covered himself in glory during those seasons, but there's little to suggest that he won't do the business if the machinery allows.

HEAVY METAL

WTCC GRIDS WILL BE BOLSTERED BY NUMEROUS PRIVATEERS

GRIDS NUDGING the 30-car mark could be the norm in the new World Touring Car Championship. In addition to 17 full manufacturer cars and the two JAS Hondas, another 14 entries have been filed for the series. Not all will be present at every race, but there'll be packed grids when they do turn up.

The Dutch Carly Motors squad isn't defending its Independents' Trophy, though BMW must still be favourite to pick up the title for privateers, assuming that Honda and Roberto Colciago are excluded from its ranks. Proteam with former bike racer Stefano D'Aste, the Eje Elgh-run BMW of Carl Rosenblad and the Wiechers-Sport squad, with which German Super Production frontrunner Marc Hennerici is graduating to the international ranks, are the contenders.

Others are likely to spring a surprise as and when they join the championship. Salvatore Tavano is concentrating on the Italian Superturismo series with the Antonelli Sport Alfa squad, but he could make the class opposition look distinctly average when he competes on the world

stage, including the three times the Italian series joins up with the WTCC.

Two more car makers should be represented in the WTCC, both as precursors to full factory campaigns in 2006. Danish Peugeot Sport Engineering should appear with a 407 developed in collaboration with the factory in France, while an appearance from the Chinese Brilliance marque still seems likely to happen. It won't be a full manufacturer entry and it won't be until the end of the season, but the significance of a Chinese car on the grid shouldn't be underestimated.

2005 CALENDAR

Apr 10	Monza (ITA)	Jul 30	Spa (B)
May 1	Magny-Cours (FRA)	Aug 28	Oschersleben (D)
May 15	Silverstone (GB)	Sep 18	Istanbul (TUR)
May 29	Brno (CZ)	Oct 2	Valencia (E)
Jun 26	Puebla (MEX)	Nov 20	Macau (PRC)

A FOND FAREWELL

SPECIAL FEATURE American editor GORDON KIRBY reflects on the many changes in the US racing scene at the end of a 32-year career with Autosport

The telegram arrived 32 years ago in February of 1973. It was from Richard Feast, the editor of Autosport at the time. "Pete Lyons coming over to cover Formula 1," the telegram read. "Would like you to take over as American editor."

I had written occasionally for Autosport from my home in Toronto since 1968 and had badgered first Simon Taylor and then Feast about doing more work for the magazine. I started in the business doing a little bit of everything after dropping out of school to work on racing cars and write about them too. I worked part-time for Gary Magwood, a Formula Ford racer who owned a race preparation shop and was the Hawke FF1600 distributor for Canada. I also helped out another young driver named Brian Stewart who raced Formula Vees and then Fords. Both Magwood and Stewart went on to win the Canadian FFord championship.

I wrote my first feature for Autosport in 1969 about wealthy Canadian department store heir George Eaton, who made a name for himself in CanAm and was about to try F1 with BRM.

Around the same time, I met David Loring, a teenage Formula Vee driver from Massachusetts who was too young to drive in SCCA races in the USA. David and I became friends and he moved up to FFord in 1970 and had a great year in '71, winning four championships, including the Canadian and IMSA FFord titles. He also won a Québec-based Jim Russell championship which boasted a season of Formula 3 in England as the prize with a factory-backed Lotus. But the F3 car was fiction. Instead we were paid a £1000 and used the money plus the profit from the sale of David's two Caldwell FFords to race once again in the category with a Merlyn.

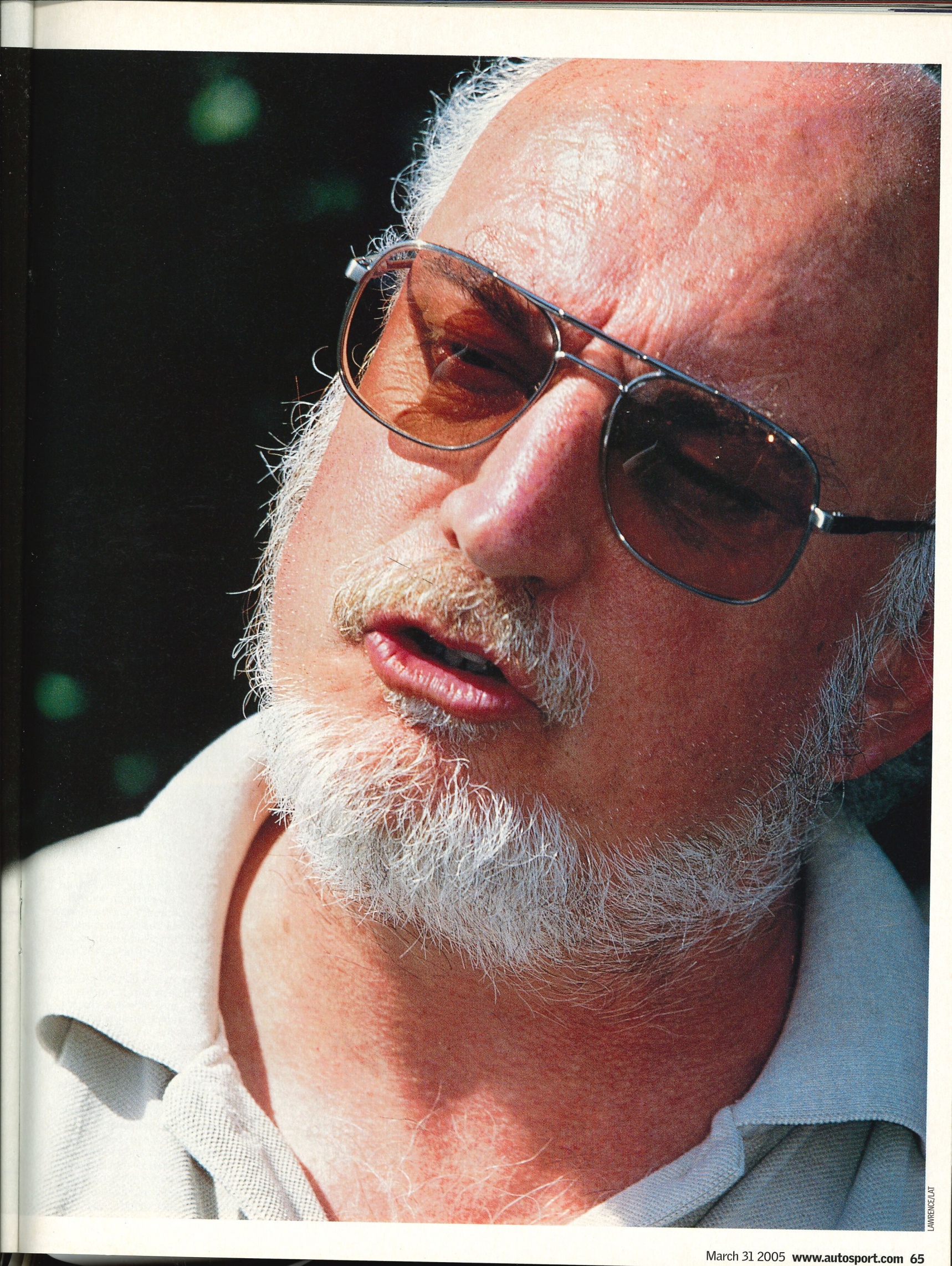
David won five races in the UK that season and set a track record at Mallory Park that stood for five years, but he also ran into a lot of bad luck. During the fall and early winter of 1972 I tried and failed to find sponsorship for David to race in F3 in '73. We returned home a little poorer but infinitely wiser in racing experience. Neither of us were sure what to do next.

When Feast's telegram arrived in the middle of a snowy February I accepted his offer immediately and my career

Main: Kirby has never been afraid to express his views - something that has earned him respect

Below: Mears (6) and Andretti (3) lead the CART World Series race at Pocono in 1984





LAWRENCE/LAT

shifted from sponsor chasing and raggedy-ann team managing to becoming a full-time racing journalist and writer. I jumped into the first of a series of Ford and Dodge vans to begin touring the United States and Canada while working for Autosport and *AutoWeek* in the USA, as well as anyone else who would buy my stories.

In those days the job description for Autosport included covering the SCCA's CanAm and Formula 5000 series as well as the Indianapolis 500 and USAC's two other 500-mile races, NASCAR's Daytona 500 and the Daytona 24 Hours and Sebring 12 Hours. It was an eclectic mixture of races, cars, venues and personalities and I enjoyed it immensely.

Looking back, my first season covering North America for Autosport was quite remarkable, not least because I witnessed Mark Donohue dominate Can-Am in Roger Penske's incredible Porsche 917/30K that had more than a thousand horsepower on tap. Donohue was an excellent driver and superb engineer who gave life to Penske Racing. I well remember him breaking Denny Hulme's track record at Elkhart Lake by a whopping seven seconds as he became the first man to lap the classic, four-mile Wisconsin road course in under two minutes. Eleven years would pass before Mario Andretti broke Donohue's standard in a Champ Car.

Meanwhile, with their mission accomplished, Porsche and Penske pulled out of CanAm and before the last race of 1974 at Riverside could take place, the SCCA pulled the plug on the series. It was the first of five major racing series – CanAm, F5000, the USAC championship, IMSA and CART – that I would see euthanised during my career with Autosport.

The original CanAm failed because the SCCA couldn't manage the rules in a time of rapidly-evolving technology and also because the club couldn't manage the manufacturers or properly promote or market the series. In the end these same factors have resulted in the failure of almost the entire sport in America beyond NASCAR and drag racing. From that perspective, my 32-year run with Autosport has been extremely sobering.

Which brings us to the Indy 500 and the USAC Championship. I had watched the 500 in movie theatres in the '60s and subsequently on TV, but had never covered a superspeedway oval race when I first arrived at Indianapolis in May of 1973. Right away the place struck me as deadly serious. Bear in mind that Bobby Unser and the spectacular '72 Eagle-turbo Offy had broken the track record the previous year by 17mph, the biggest leap in speed in the speedway's history. At the Ontario Motor Speedway in '72, Unser and team-mate Jerry Grant became the first men to lap a closed course at more than 200mph and watching the USAC cars perform on an oval for the first time in the spring of '73 gave new meaning to words such as 'fear' and 'respect'.

That 1973 Indy 500 was a disastrous event. Veteran Art Pollard was killed in practice and the race itself became a horror show, taking three days to run because of repeated rainstorms and resulting in the death of Swede Savage and a crewman, and serious burns and other injuries to Salt Walther in one of three attempts to start the race. The race was eventually red-flagged at two-thirds distance and the next month USAC slashed fuel tank capacity in half and began to restrict the width of the massive rear wings that had proliferated from 1971 through to modern '73.

This was the beginning of the modern age of racing as more and more limitations were placed on every aspect of racing car design in repeated and often vain attempts to restrain both lap speeds and costs. It wasn't long before the many great innovations and spectacular racing cars of the '60s and '70s were replaced by the increasing spec-car syndrome which has swept through the sport so that today almost every aspect of chassis, engine and aerodynamics are defined by the rulebook in all forms of racing.

For a few years USAC considered adopting the SCCA's stock-block F5000 formula for championship or Indycar racing. USAC and SCCA co-sanctioned America's F5000 series in 1975 and '76 and the category boomed in those years with almost 50 cars showing up for the inaugural Long Beach GPF5000 race in the fall of '75. Brit Brian Redman was the scourge of F5000, winning the championship for three years in a row to beat the likes of Andretti and Al Unser. 'Our Brian' was and is a fine fellow, a tremendous raconteur, humorist and writer, who is probably the most unrecognised great driver from those days simply because after dabbling in it on two occasions he decided F1 wasn't for him. He preferred to race elsewhere and Redman's record of diversity in international sportscar racing, IMSA and F5000 is as good as anyone's.



AMERICAN RACING LEGEND

MARIO ANDRETTI

FROM MY standpoint, Gordon is one those savvy old professionals in our sport – certainly one of my favourite journalists, and one I've always looked forward to reading. He and I have always gotten along well, and I've enjoyed his perspective on different situations, because he's opinionated to the point that it makes reading his stories interesting and thought-provoking.

The thing is, I think Gordon really gets it. He

understands the sport very, very, well – and all its disciplines, too, not just the one he specialises in. His knowledge of it is huge, no question about it, and he always gave a very good account to his readers in Europe of what was going on in the USA.

What I really liked, too, was that Gordon was never afraid to say what he thought – there aren't enough journalists prepared to do that, in my opinion. I think

there's a very fine line between trying to ram through your own philosophy on things and stating your opinion firmly on something you really believe in – and I think Gordon walked that line pretty well, I must say. Mind you, maybe to some extent I think that because he and I tend to have similar opinions!

Put it this way, I liked the fact that Gordon never had 'blinders' on, that he always understood the bigger picture, that he always said what he thought. I'm one of his fans! If he's not going to be writing for Autosport any longer, his work is going to be missed, that's for sure.



GRAND PRIX EDITOR

NIGEL ROEBUCK

"WHERE'S GK?" I said to a mutual friend in the Milwaukee paddock one morning. "Oh," came the smiling reply, "having an argument someplace..."

Kirby was, is, and will be always be, a man with strong opinions about racing, about life in general, and maybe that's one of the reasons why we've always got along so well. We met, I suppose, in the early '70s, and have been close friends ever since.

It doesn't hurt, of course, that we tend to hold similar views on this sport, being very much at the 'purist' end

of the spectrum, rather than the 'showbiz' end. Perhaps for that reason, like me, Gordon always much enjoyed the company of Denis Jenkinson, and indeed they always had much in common – both bearded, both bachelors, both living in the back of beyond, both irreverent, both excellent company, both obsessed with racing and both able to spot a phoney at 50 paces.

Like Mario, I've always respected Gordon for writing exactly what he thinks, for not being afraid to rock the boat, even though he knows – as we all know – that it's

not necessarily the way to a quiet life. Beware the journalist who is 'everyone's friend'. He's like the racing driver who never damaged a car.

No one who knows Kirby doubts for a second his deep love of this sport, nor that it is from there that his passionate, opinionated, writings stem. He has been in this for the long haul, and if – like anyone of long experience – not all the changes in motor racing have been to his taste, his essential enthusiasm for it has never waned.

"LIKE MARIO, I'VE ALWAYS RESPECTED GORDON FOR WRITING EXACTLY WHAT HE THINKS AND FOR NOT BEING AFRAID TO ROCK THE BOAT"

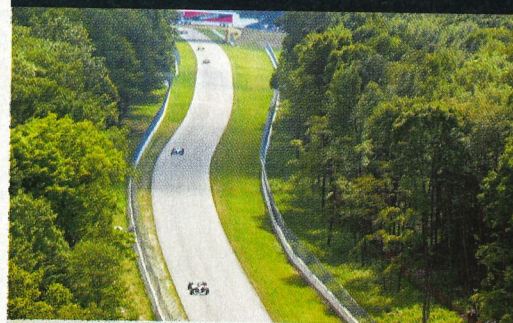
NIGEL ROEBUCK



Main: Mears was one of the legends of Indy before the CART/IRL split drove the stars away from the Brickyard

GK'S 10 BEST TRACKS

"ROAD AMERICA REMAINS TRUE TO ITSELF AND UNADULTERATED"



ELKHART LAKE

The granddaddy of America's permanent road circuits, Road America (above) is 50 years old this year and remains true to its original self, improved somewhat, but unadulterated by a single chicane or redesigned corner through its magnificent four miles.

ST JOVITE

Also recently refurbished, this fine road circuit at Mount Tremblant in Québec's Laurentian Mountains is in the same class as the five previous tracks. St Jovite's long, diving first turn provides some of the finest spectating anywhere.

MILWAUKEE

The flat Milwaukee Mile oval in suburban Milwaukee is the world's oldest race track. Opened in 1905 as a dirt track, it was paved in '54 and is one of the few circuits that retains a connection to the USA's oval racing past.

MOSPORT

My old home track has recently been refurbished and like Elkhart is unchanged from its original 1961 layout. Dan Gurney refers to Mosport as the track in North America most like the Nürburgring, albeit much shorter.

BRIDGEHAMPTON

No longer with us, Bridgehampton's location in the ultra-chic Hamptons on New York's Long Island meant it would never survive. But it was a great track with fast, swooping corners diving through the sand dunes within sight of Long Island Sound.

MOTEGI

More than a dozen new superspeedways were built across the USA during the '90s but the best of all of the new tracks that came to life during that gilded age was Honda's Motegi oval in the mountains north of Tokyo.

SURFERS PARADISE

Despite the likes of Long Beach and Toronto, the best street track I've seen is Surfers on Australia's Gold Coast (below). It's the longest, fastest street circuit Champ Car races on, with a high-quality wall and safety system and simply the best overall setting and fan turnout.

RIVERSIDE

The west coast's version of Bridgehampton lasted longer, from 1957-88, before being overtaken by greater LA's urban sprawl. But it was another driver's track with fast, sweeping turns through the desert sand that drew big crowds for many years.

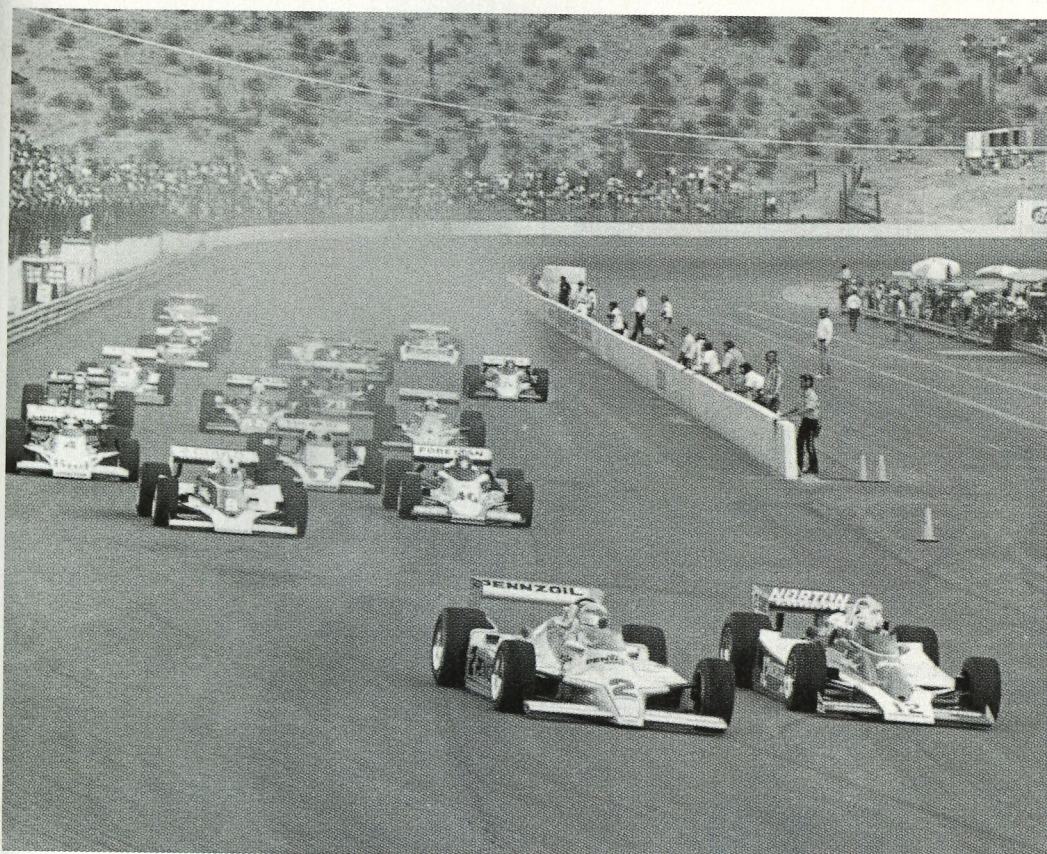
WESTWOOD

Rocks and boulders lay in wait just feet from the edge of this demanding little road course in suburban Vancouver. Westwood was the equal of Mosport and St Jovite until it too was engulfed by urban sprawl. A housing development and shopping mall have occupied the site for many years.

LAGUNA SECA

Substantially revamped in 1988, the current track retains much of the old circuit and is a fearsome physical test, one of the toughest in the business. And it's located on the beautiful Monterey peninsula south of San Francisco.





Above: Brothers Bobby and Al Unser fight it out in the first ever CART race at Phoenix in 1979

Left: Mears was a sounding board for another driver rated by Kirby, Paul Tracy, at Penske in 1994

Then, of course, there was Gilles Villeneuve who I had the great pleasure to watch and cover as he came up through Fford and Formula Atlantic. Even then Gilles's impish sense of humour and spectacular driving style stood out. Villeneuve spent four years in Formula Atlantic, driving for Kris Harrison's Ecurie Canada team in '74, '76 and '77, and running his own car in '75. Thirty years later it's impossible to imagine a Formula Atlantic driver jumping directly to F1 but that's exactly what Gilles did after winning the Atlantic championship in '76 and beating F1 stars James Hunt, Alan Jones and Patrick Depailler at Trois-Rivières.

I will always remember Gilles and Keke Rosberg banging wheels as they drove side-by-side through the first turn at Mosport at the start of the opening Atlantic race of 1977. They were deeply serious rivals throughout the year, neither speaking to the other as they battled for the attention of F1 team managers.

At Québec City at the end of the year Villeneuve crashed two cars in practice as he went all-out to prevent Rosberg from stealing the championship. But on race day he came through the field to win the race and the title after Bobby Rahal's engine failed.

On a wall of my office at home hangs a photograph taken by Paul Webb of Rosberg totally sideways in his pink Fred Opert Chevron sponsored by Excita condoms. The car features a dildo attached to the nose and Keke is seriously scraping the wall at Québec City with his left rear wheel as he throws the car onto the pit straight. In those pre-ground effect days Atlantic cars provided a perfect balance of horsepower and tyre grip. It was a superb training category that totally prepared guys like Gilles and Keke for F1 and also offered the fans spectacular raw-boned racing. But almost 30 years

later, mismanagement of the sport both technically and promotionally has left the USA's open-wheel ladder system at death's door.

For stark contrast, check out NASCAR. I take my hat off to Bill France Jr and his late father Bill Sr, not only for building the world's healthiest form of racing but also constructing an equally strong ladder system through the Busch and Truck series and across the many reaches of the USA to the grass roots level with regional and local NASCAR championships. Since the

Frances opened the high-banked Daytona Speedway in 1959, they have steadily expanded their form of the sport, building a complete system as well as an unequalled management and marketing structure. Yet they have also kept control of the competing manufacturers both technically and in how and where they spend their money.

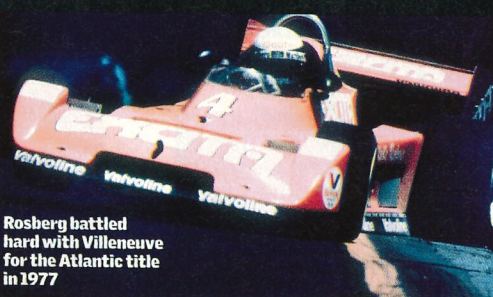
In the meantime a rabble of squabbling parties, including the SCCA, USAC, IMSA, CART and the IRL have combined over the years to decimate the majority of the wide sweep of the rest of American circuit racing. I'm afraid to say that arrogance, greed, hypocrisy and the lust for power have left us with a bleak field of failed visions and the utter destruction of the ladder system. In America today, Champ Car, IndyCar and sportscar racing have dwindled to being the country's least relevant sports and are barely covered in the nation's newspapers, with small crowds at all but a few races and laughably tiny TV audiences.

I can tell you that the greatest drivers I've had the good fortune to know such as Mario Andretti, Dan Gurney, Bobby Unser, Parnelli Jones and Rick Mears are deeply saddened by what has happened to motorsport in America over the past decade. It's been diminished and devalued and at the same time the final vestiges of technological intrigue have been squeezed out of the rulebook as the sport has devolved, NASCAR-like, to the lowest common denominator. Without doubt, racing's great revolutionary days of the '60s and '70s are gone and with them the magic that made the Indy 500 and the original CanAm such great things has irretrievably faded.

Can that magical whiff be recreated? In a NASCAR-dominated world it's a tremendous challenge for each of Champ Car, the IRL IndyCar Series, American Le Mans Series and GrandAm. I wish them all good luck! ☒

GK'S TOP DRIVERS

SEVEN STANDOUTS HEAD A LIST OF ALL-TIME GREATS



Rosberg battled hard with Villeneuve for the Atlantic title in 1977

MARIO ANDRETTI

Without doubt the greatest racing driver I have known. He has raced and won in almost every type of car known to man and is one of the sport's finest ambassadors.

DAN GURNEY

The greatest overall racing man I've encountered. Dan's equally diverse driving career preceded my time with Autosport but I witnessed much of his remarkable second career as a team owner, car builder and innovator. His spirit of adventure and innovation is what racing is about.

BOBBY UNSER

The greatest character among the great drivers I've known. A tremendously forceful driver, as aggressive as anyone at playing the rules to the maximum and, of course, a truly independent thinker.

AL UNSER

Bobby's younger brother is a very different personality, almost diametrically opposed. But he was an even better driver than Bobby.

AL UNSER JR

Al's son was an equally great driver and versatile too. Though his career was darkened by his problems with alcohol, his talent and achievements should not be devalued.

MICHAEL ANDRETTI

Al Jr's great contemporary. As his father Mario always said, the fire burned in Michael's heart, and that made him a great, aggressive driver.

RICK MEARS

A sublime talent, a genius of throttle control and smooth, precise driving.

BEYOND Champ Car racing there were GILLES VILLENEUVE and KEKE ROSBERG, highly-spirited racers both, and good men too. In NASCAR, I would rate 'The Silver Fox' DAVID PEARSON as sublime a talent as Mears and an equally clean driver. Pearson only went after NASCAR's championship three times and won it every time.

I met his great rival RICHARD

PETTY, the seven-time champion, at Daytona in 1975. The 'King' politely asked if I could wait five minutes to do an interview. He returned a few minutes later flashing that famous grin and suggested we go to his rental car. Some 90 minutes later we emerged after a charming and informative chat about himself, his father Lee, the Petty family and NASCAR. I was impressed for life.

One of the most ferocious racers I ever saw was CALEY YARBOROUGH, a three-time NASCAR champion in the '70s with Junior Johnson's team.

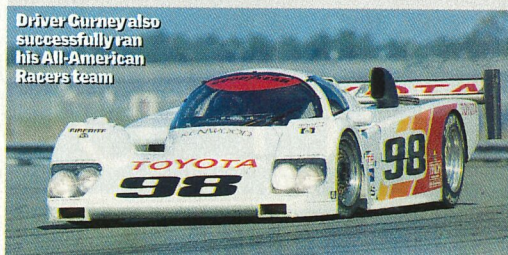
Yarborough and rival BOBBY ALLISON were two of the toughest, fastest drivers NASCAR has produced. Seven-times champion DALE EARNHARDT was in their league but his penchant for 'using the fender' meant his reputation among his rivals was contentious.

As well as MARK DONOHUE and BRIAN REDMAN, AL HOLBERT, was an excellent IMSA driver and team boss who tried other categories, including CART and NASCAR.

EMERSON FITTIPALDI started the flood of international interest in Champ Cars in 1984, and went on to become a true maestro of the category. BOBBY RAHAL fought with Villeneuve and Rosberg in his early days, raced F3 and F2 in Europe, and was quite successful in IMSA and sportscars as well as CART.

ALEX ZANARDI stands out as a great character as well as a fantastic driver and crowd-pleaser, and the man is an inspiration. GREG MOORE was a tremendous talent who shone brightly for a brief period of time before his untimely death in 1999. The man who won the CART title that afternoon, JUAN PABLO MONTOYA, was clearly an exceptional talent.

CRISTIANO DA MATTA is one of the most motivated drivers I've ever met and is very cool and analytical. PAUL TRACY is another great fighter and the driver with the most powerful identity with the public.



Driver Gurney also successfully ran his All-American Racers team

NOT JUST A PRETTY FACE

Susie Stoddart has a good racing CV. Twice a McLaren Autosport BRDC Award finalist, she has impressed in Formula Renault and moves into Formula 3 with sound credentials. But Alan Docking Racing's new girl is honest enough to acknowledge that people aren't much interested in that. She will be followed, watched and judged this year, starting at Donington Park this weekend, because of her gender.

"The thing about being female is that there are a lot of people who will try to shoot you down," says Stoddart. "There are a lot of drivers on the grid who have done far less than me. People can say what they want and rate me as they want, but I am determined to get to F1."

"With a good car and a great team in a championship that doesn't have many second-year drivers in it, I'm just going to let my driving do the talking – and people can just watch that."

But why are there any doubters? The main reason is that Stoddart hasn't actually done any winning in three years of Formula Renault with DFR, Motaworld and Comtec. It's a subject that lends itself well to excessive harping, but even if there are blokes out there who were Formula BMW, Formula Renault or Formula 3 midfielders last year, the trouble for Stoddart is that they are blokes. The spotlight is all hers.

"I should have won my first race at Thruxton last year, but then I let Mike Conway pass me round the outside," she says. "You learn these things, but I'm not going to beat myself up about the fact that I didn't win a race."

"The win was so close a couple of times; it just didn't come. A lot of people forget that Comtec were a new team to FRenault last year. I was consistently in the top six so I know I am on the pace and I can make it in F3. I'm not being unrealistic. I know what it's going to take to win in F3."

So there it is. Stoddart may not yet be a winner, which is what a racing driver should be, but she was a front-runner and has got podiums to her name, which means she's shown a turn of speed. Formula 3 could make or break her, but new team boss Alan Docking won't be surprised if she starts winning. Docking has never had a female driver before, but he's seen both talents and no-hopers in his cars over the years – and he's glowing when he talks about Stoddart.

"Take the gender out of it," says Docking. "She is special as a racing driver. The way she drove at Pembrey when she tested our old car in November, she was front-row material. She was hooked up. At Pembrey you can see whether a driver

is on it or not – she was definitely on it."

"Then she did a day at Silverstone and she just went straight into taking Copse just about flat. There was no fuss. She knew she was doing it but she didn't think that was so exceptional. I didn't know where she was before she tested, but at that point I realised she was a very capable driver."

Docking is genuinely excited about this year, after a rather dismal 2004 with Will Power driving. Again, the Silverstone-based team is running just one Championship Class car, with Paul Anthony on engineering duty. Despite a late start to testing and some teething problems on the new Dallara-Mugen, the Aussie veteran says working with Stoddart makes a pleasant change.

"Some drivers... you struggle to get anywhere with them. It's sad, but possibly it's because the male at age 20 isn't too sparky," he says. "But out of the car Susie is just so refreshing. She's got a personality: sparkle and charisma. She's only a young girl but she's very mature. It's great to see it."

"Most of the guys who come through... there's not much sparkle. In Mark Webber I saw something else, although maybe it was just because he was an Aussie! He knew what he wanted. Susie knows what she wants too. She's as good as anyone else with her hat on, and with her hat off she's 10 times better than anyone else."

"She won't bottle out when things get tough. She's needed more bottle to get where she is than the other guys, because no bloke wants to be passed by a bird! She's never had anybody letting her past easily."

Stoddart has had links with Docking since driving ADR cars twice as part of the McLaren Autosport BRDC Award selection process in 2003 and '04, and a deal was on the cards as soon as those additional tests were completed early last winter. She says that the ADR team – champion with Robbie Kerr in 2002 – was a clear winner when she looked around for a seat.

"The biggest thing was that Docko didn't look at me as a token female for the team," she says. "It wouldn't have mattered what I was – he just looked at me as a driver and that means a lot to me. We approached a number of teams and some of them definitely weren't like that. Docking was the only one I believed in."

Not only will she have the experience of Docking and Anthony to help her along in her first F3 season, but also advice from her housemate Adam Carroll, who was runner-up in the series last season.

"I ask him so many questions he gets fed up with it!" she says. "But he has so much F3 experience. I ask him about starts, set-ups and everything – he's really open about it. He's come along to a couple of tests and helped out too... and I rate him highly as a driver. We've got a very healthy banter going now – Scottish and Irish together, you can't do much worse than that!"

With a top team and all that help, two years of slicks-and-wings experience, plus high-profile sponsorship from BT, Stoddart knows she can't be drawn into buying time.

"I've got no excuses for not doing well this year," she says. "There's a great team behind me and the package is all there for a good year. So it's all down to me."

Nor is she interested in being best of the girls – although there is another female on the grid this year in the form of Carlin Motorsport's Keiko Ihara.

"It's a nice surprise that she's there, but I don't want to be first girl – I want to be first overall," she says. "I don't finish second and think, 'Wow I'm the first female to finish second in Formula Renault.' I just think, 'I wanted to win that race.'"

A win at Donington Park on Sunday is Stoddart's aim. But a top-six finish would probably be enough to silence the waiting critics – for a while, at least. ☛

Right: Stoddart has teamed up with Alan Docking Racing for her first season in Formula 3, forging an immediate rapport with the squad and impressing with her test pace



INTERVIEW Susie
Stoddart is determined
to prove she has the
speed to win in F3.
By RICHARD ASHER



THREE'S CRO



26
MIKE CONWAY

FORTEC MOTORSPORT DALLARA-OPEL

The reigning Formula Renault UK champion is the leading light among the F3 newcomers, and qualifies as title favourite. The reason for that, other than his impressive cv and cool head, is he's had brilliant preparation. He's tested at nearly every track over the winter and has starred in group tests. With Phill di Fazio tuning his car, Opel's top contender has no excuses.



2
JAMES WALKER

FORTEC MOTORSPORT DALLARA-OPEL

The Jerseyman didn't look anything special with Hitech last season, but after switching camps and clocking up nearly as much mileage as Conway he's back with more confidence. Some believe Walker did not do his talent justice in 2004—this year will be his chance to answer his naysayers. He'll have his work to cut out to beat Conway, but should be faster than Ronayne O'Mahony. May do better on occasion than some would expect.



3
RONAYNE O'MAHONY

FORTEC MOTORSPORT DALLARA-OPEL

This is going to be a learning year for the Irish driver, whose experience is limited after just half a season for Performance Racing in the National Class last year. He could well have benefited from another year in the older cars. With Fortec expanding to run a third entry, it's likely that his crew is going to be finding its way as well. The Irishman is not expected to be a frontrunner.



6
CHARLIE KIMBALL

CARLIN MOTORSPORT DALLARA-MUGEN

If there was betting on the F3 title, the cheerful Californian would be worth a punt. He's impressed the team with his quick adaptation after stepping up from Formula Ford, and looks set to lead Carlin's hopes after the team's comparatively rough 2004. Testing has shown Kimball is fast, calm and a quick learner who doesn't let his head drop. The American will work with engineer Paul Wallace.



27
DAN CLARKE

DOUBLE R DALLARA-MUGEN

The new Kimi Räikkönen-backed squad has two quick drivers, and Formula Ford Festival winner Clarke looks at first glance to be the quicker, if only because he knows the British tracks. If Charlie Kimball is a good dark horse, then Clarke should be the same—he finished second in Formula Ford UK last year, two places ahead of Kimball. There's no reason why this team shouldn't be right on the pace with ex-Carlin man Boyo Hieatt at the helm.



28
BRUNO SENNA

DOUBLE R DALLARA-MUGEN

Bruno Senna Lalli obviously comes from the chirpy side of the family, but he'll do well to keep up the humour in what could be a difficult season. His few Formula BMW outings last year were not enough to prove more than the presence of some talent—F3 will be the real test. By moving up so early he has not taken the easy option, but some strong showings will do his reputation good.



12
MARKO ASMER

HITECH RACING DALLARA-MUGEN

Hitech is now a GP2 team so it has halved its F3 effort to two cars. The Renault engines are gone and the team welcomes the arrival of Mugen power as Bruce Jenkins takes over the day-to-day running. About the only constant is Asmer, who is a definite favourite if only because he is a second-year driver. Estonia's fastest track star improved quietly last year and has shone in testing so far.



11
TIM BRIDGMAN

HITECH RACING DALLARA-MUGEN

Bridgman has done a fair amount of damage to Hitech machinery in winter testing, and popular opinion is that he'll need to pull back on the aggression. But smoothness is key to speed in FBMW, and he won the title there, so he has the capacity to succeed. Bridgman is going to be an entertaining racer if nothing else—but there's mental work to do to unlock his speed.



69
RYAN LEWIS

T-SPORT DALLARA-MUGEN

The National Class champ stays with T-Sport and moves into the latest machinery. Lewis could fly this year, but that's in some doubt until the first race. The Briton was solid cruising to the National Class title, but his opposition was pretty thin. Lewis could be at the top or bottom end of the top 10—T-Sport will be hoping for the former after slim pickings with Karun Chandhok in 2004.



9
STEPHEN JELLEY

MENU MOTORSPORT DALLARA-OPEL

It could be a lean year for Mike Baker's Opel-powered team, which has been unable to find a second driver—though don't be surprised if Rob Austin turns up! Baker-managed Jelley had his deal signed before the end of 2004, when his National Class escapades earned him the nickname 'Wobbly'. That's unkind because he was a multiple class race-winner, but the Championship Class is going to be a very hard place to develop.



8
STEVEN KANE

PROMATECME LOLA-MUGEN

Chris Weller's team signed a very late deal with Kane to ensure that there will be a second Championship Class Lola on the grid. With two top drivers in the British chassis, the Lolas should develop faster (Danny Watts, below, was a lone Lola runner in the UK last year), though Dallaras still vastly outnumber them. Kane returns to Britain after a frustrating year in Spanish F3.



Bruno Senna, Danilo Dirani and Salvador Duran will provide South American flair

OWD

The British F3 championship gets going this weekend, when the series' new recruits line up alongside some more familiar faces. Let battle commence. By RICHARD ASHER



4 CHRISTIAN BAKKERUD
CARLIN MOTORSPORT DALLARA-MUGEN

The Anglicised Dane didn't show that well in Formula BMW last year, but has got near the top of testing times more than once in F3. But there have been days that he's been off the pace—he's not always got the best from his tyres immediately and that could be a problem in qualifying. This year Bakkerud will be engineered by Mark Owen, who ran erratic Clivio Piccione in 2004.



5 KEIKO IHARA
CARLIN MOTORSPORT DALLARA-MUGEN

One of two women competitors on the grid this year, the Japanese Formula Dream graduate and ex-model (backed by Ivy Cosmetics) is likely to find it tough going. It's not a case of her being embarrassingly slow, more that the learning curve is going to be almost vertical. Ihara has been among the National Class runners on the testing timesheets and may find herself racing them this season.



Below left:
McLaren Autosport BRDC finalist Jonathan Kennard is tipped to star in the National class...

Below right: ...but
ADR team-mate and Scandinavian Formula Ford star Juho Annala is also highly-regarded

Below centre:
Mexican Salvador Duran has shown test pace in his P1-run Dallara



1 DANILO DIRANI
P1 MOTORSPORT LOLA-MUGEN

P1 boss Roly Vincini has taken a punt on the Lola and Dirani, who comes from a trying season at Carlin. The Brazilian, who dominated Croft in 2004 before fading, may thrive on the responsibility of carrying Lola's hopes—provided the car is good. So far the Huntingdon chassis looks thereabouts. Vincini is happy with the development process; let's see if he can get the best from his driver.



7 SUSIE STODDART
ALAN DOCKING RACING DALLARA-MUGEN

All eyes will be on Stoddart this year. If she can win then she'll hit headlines, but if she fails then a lot of people might be nasty and gleeful. Frankly she's not used to winning, after a drought in Formula Renault, but she has her reasons for that (see feature). Not a likely title contender in her first year, but podiums could be on the cards. Enjoying Alan Docking Racing despite a nigglesome start to testing and an ankle injury.



NATIONAL CLASS IS ON THE UP IN '05

"WITH GUARANTEED POWER PARITY, IT'S NOW ALL ABOUT SETTING UP THE CAR AND HONING INDIVIDUAL DRIVING SKILLS"

THE NEWLY-NAMED National Class is in recovery this season, following a pretty sad turnout in 2004. The primary change is on the engine front, where Neil Brown Engineering now supplies a standard Mugen-Honda engine designed for reliability and economy.

Although the likes of Performance Racing (previously an Opel runner) were initially unhappy about the change, it's hard to argue against the spec engine. With guaranteed power parity, it's now all about setting up the car and honing individual driving skills—which is what the National Class is all about.

With engine costs now reduced and plenty of old Championship Class cars for sale, the entry is looking very healthy, although the top teams from last year have still to find drivers.

Reigning champion team T-Sport has not yet filled the seat vacated by Ryan Lewis, while Performance is also driverless—although Suk Sandher was set for a late deal.

The favourites for glory now are Alan Docking Racing's bright young pair Juho Annala and Jonathan Kennard. Whatever Susie Stoddart manages in Championship Class, ADR's scholarship lads should provide Docking with a double shot at title glory.

Annala comes in pretty highly-rated from the world of Scandinavian Formula Ford—the Finn shone in a Formula Ford UK outing at Brands Hatch last year. There's no doubt he's fast, but he's still a little on the wild side at times. More calculating is Kennard, the reigning Formula Palmer Audi champ. Over the course of a year he should find himself in contention.

Salvador Duran, the very well-funded Mexican, joins P1 Motorsport in a Dallara, and has already shown plenty of raw talent and commitment in the quick stuff. However, he still needs to find his way through technical options.

There's also a Lola representative, with Promatecme's Charles Holling inheriting Danny Watts' race-winning vehicle from last season. The Brit showed occasional promise in Formula Renault last season. Angolan prospect Ricardo Teixeira also joins the grid in a Carlin Motorsport entry, but has a long way to go driving-wise.

Brand new Formula 3 teams include Team SWR (Nick Jones and Josh Fisher), Fluid Motorsport Developments (with Valle Makela a possibility) and hopefully RaySport, while Edenbridge makes a welcome return to the F3 fray with Chinese driver Cheong Lou Meng.



CHEVROLET: LEAVING THE IRL ON A HIGH

The rumours had drifted from mouth to ear for months, but that didn't ease the shock of the formal announcement in October. Instead, the news fell like a hammer on an anvil. General Motors, the most steady influence in American open-wheel racing and the foundation upon which the Indy Racing League was built, would leave the series at the end of the 2005 season.

At Panther Racing headquarters on Indianapolis's southwest side, the announcement was yesterday's news. Inside the offices and conference rooms at Panther, the effect of the impending decision had long been considered, and the team had chosen loyalty. GM Racing and its Chevrolet-branded Cosworth engine would remain the driving force behind Panther's cars, even as two other GM-powered teams – Red Bull Cheever Racing and Dreyer & Reinhold – switched engine manufacturers, and another – Patrick Racing – went out of business.

The response wasn't exactly enthusiastic. Why stay with a lame-duck manufacturer? What good could be gained from hanging on to an engine that seemed hopelessly defeated? The answer to those questions, when placed in context with the results of the first two races of the season, are flushed out to be positive.

Quite simply, in terms of raw speed, Panther may have made a very wise call.

The team blasted out of the gate with a pole position by Tomas Scheckter (and a third on the grid by team-mate Tomás Enge) in the season opener at Homestead-Miami Speedway. In the second race of the 17-race schedule, Scheckter started fourth, Enge seventh. The final results weren't what the team expected – Scheckter crashed out of both races, while Enge retired with a mechanical issue at Homestead and a crash at Phoenix – but the speed needed to compete against Toyota and Honda was definitely there. So, too, was the defiance.

"I've been encouraged since day one of this year," says John Barnes, CEO of Panther Racing and one of the team's four co-owners. "Everybody thought we were lunatics for staying with GM and Scheckter. Obviously, that's been proven wrong."

Lunatics because the Chevy was far off the pace in '04. Lunatics because Scheckter has a reputation for recklessness, even if many of his frequent shunts aren't of his own accord. Lunatics, perhaps, because Cosworth is now owned by Kevin Kalkhoven, one of three co-owners of Champ Car, the IRL's arch-enemy. Lunatics because Panther might find itself adrift in the open-wheel sea following GM's departure.

Still, after winning the pole at Homestead and showing fierce speed in pre-season tests, Panther, Barnes, Scheckter and Enge don't care what anybody thinks. The only point to

Main: Chevy grunt took Panther's Tomas Scheckter to pole in this year's IRL season-opener

be made now isn't political at all. It's economic. It's about survival.

Take Scheckter, for instance. He's in the final year of his contract with Panther, mired in the strange circumstance of trying to win races with an engine that won't exist next year while trying to land a new contract and/or ride for '06. At the same time, his possible success only serves to benefit his existing team, which may or may not be his future employer, in its equally unusual effort to hook up with one of the opposing manufacturers for '06.

"The better we can do this year with this engine is good for the team and good for me," Scheckter says. "It will help us get another engine deal, or it will help me move somewhere else. At the end of the day, the goal hasn't changed, and that's to do the best job you can do."

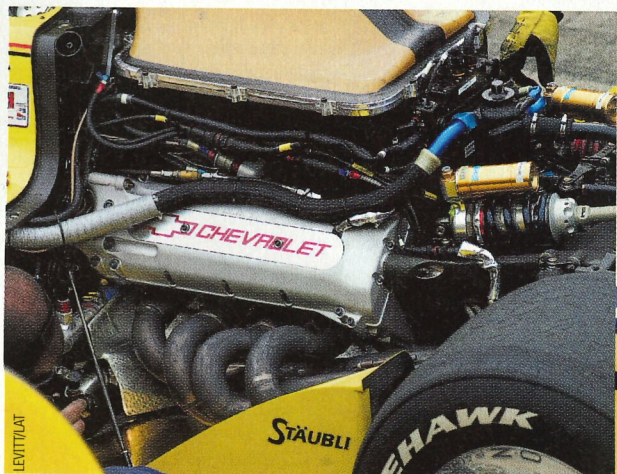
In this situation, the best job you can do is to focus on the task at hand. During the off-season Barnes was outspoken in his criticism of the IRL's new direction. The cream of the IRL's old-school crop, Panther won championships in 2001 and 2002 with Sam Hornish Jr. Since then, Barnes has watched suspiciously as the flight of refugees from Champ Car to the IRL brought with it engine leasing, heavily-subsidised teams and an economic situation that makes landing sponsorship increasingly difficult for smaller players.

"There are a lot of changes that are going to have to be made in regard to how we go about doing business in the IRL," Barnes said earlier this year. "You have one team [Andretti-Green Racing] whose total sponsorship package outside the engine manufacturer doesn't amount to one good sponsorship for other teams. They're being totally subsidised by an engine manufacturer. That makes it hard for teams like Foyt and Dreyer & Reinhold to sell \$5 million or \$6 million sponsorships when these other guys are selling primary sponsorship packages for a million or a million and a half."

Now, a few months after the statement and fresh from landing a primary sponsor for Enge's car, Barnes has cooled the veiled threats about Panther's future in the IRL, and insinuations about the future of the series in general. Instead, he's focused on the immediate task: winning races. This team has the speed – as evidenced by the first two races – to cash larger cheques. The time has come, and everyone at Panther knows it, to finally start winning.

"We don't stand up, beat our chests and make remarks," Barnes said before the second race of the season at Phoenix. "We just go about our business and let other people talk about it. GM has been remarkable. They've made great strides. Our guys are diligently working to make this thing successful. What's rewarding us now is good results."

Or possibly the *potential* for good results. Scheckter was →



Left: Developed by Cosworth, the Chevy engine is still a potent force

Right: Chevrolet has been the local name fighting Japanese marques



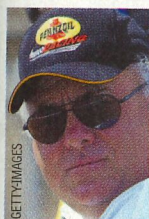
AS THE BOW TIE GETS READY TO QUIT THE IRL...



WHY DID **PANTHER** STICK WITH **CHEVROLET?**

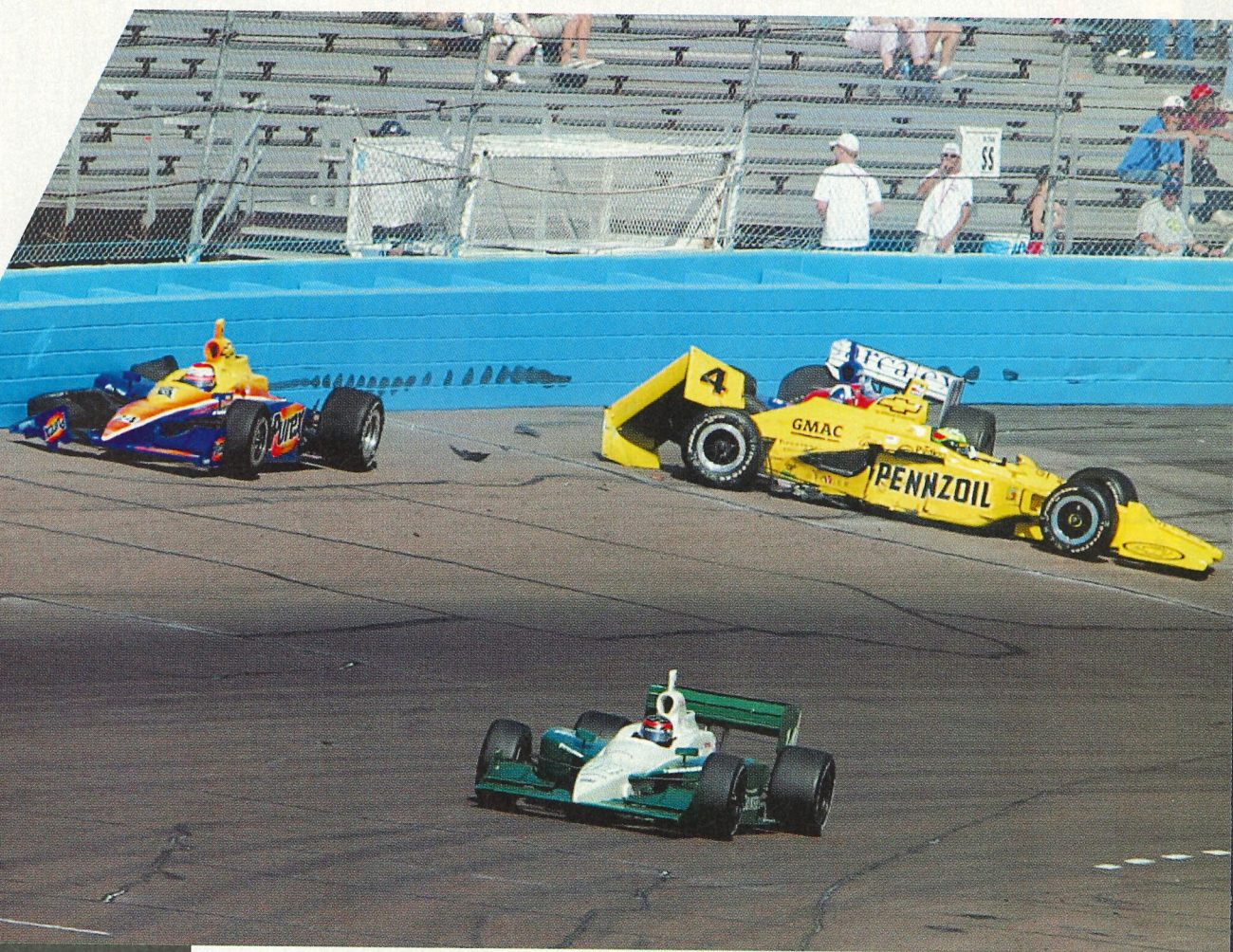
ANALYSIS Staying with GM Racing's engines for their last season of Indycars might yet prove a smart move. By JEFF OLSON

CHEVROLET: LEAVING THE IRL ON A HIGH



Above: Panther boss John Barnes has taken a risk by sticking with Chevy

Right: Scheckter needs to shake off his reputation for having accidents



← forced into the marbles twice at Phoenix, eventually crashing and finishing 17th. Enge also dropped out of the Phoenix race, but not before he'd raced competently in just his fourth IRL event – and first on a one-mile oval.

"I was told by everybody on our team that the Chevy would be strong this season," Enge says. "I believed it in the beginning, but I started to really believe it after the first test in Homestead. I don't think I can say any more about this because I've only been with this team for two races, but I know the circumstances surrounding the team last year. I know there is improvement in the engine and in this team."

The attack has begun in earnest, and Scheckter – and Panther and GM Racing, for that matter – is in a position to make something happen that would shake the IRL to its core. Being the sole focus of a manufacturer has its advantages, especially when that manufacturer – and the race team – has a point to prove.

"We feel it's a good opportunity for us because they're concentrating all of their efforts on us alone," Barnes says. "It's a much better situation for us. We can dictate our own destiny, in a way. We really enjoy challenges here. This is a company that's made up of people who are extremely competitive. Most race teams are, but ours is in particular. These guys would fight you over a toothpick."

They might be focused and aggressive, but they might not be as political as originally thought. For many members of Panther, Scheckter included, the goal is much more acute, the focus much more personal. The politics of the GM/IRL dust-up, while significant to the grand scheme, means little to the individual. All guys like Enge and Scheckter want from GM Racing is speed.

"I'm concerned about them making me a good engine, and that's what they do," Scheckter says. "That's what they are there for. I can only take it race by race and year by year. The politics is over my head. I don't want to get involved in that. I don't think it affects me or anybody on the team. Everybody is focused on what they can do and what they need to do to win races this year. Next year, the owners will start dealing with it."

By then, however, all four parties – GM, Panther, Scheckter and Enge – could be far, far away. ☛

WHY GM WON'T CHANGE ITS MIND

IRL RULES CHANGE AGAIN FOR 2007 – BUT CHEVY ISN'T LIKELY TO COMMIT

CAN THE IRL IndyCar Series lure GM Racing back into the fold? Don't count on it.

Almost immediately after General Motors announced its decision to part with the IRL, speculation began that the league might be able to talk GM Racing officials into returning. The talk surfaced because the league is in the middle of discussions regarding specs for the next generation of engines, beginning in 2007.

"Never say never," says Joe Negri, GM Racing's IRL programme manager. "The business climate could change between now and then, but odds are we'll stick with our plan. If we go out and win every race, of course, it would be hard to leave with success like that. But this was a business decision. The automotive market would have to get much better before we could make that decision."

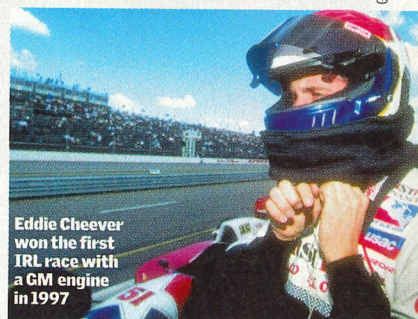
GM's primary issues, aside from its inability to compete with its Japanese rivals, were

'production-based versus purpose-built' and the notion of engine leasing. The IRL essentially was founded on the production-based Oldsmobile Aurora, which later morphed into the Chevrolet brand. One of Tony George's stated principles in his 1996 split from CART was engine ownership instead of leasing. Leasing, the preferred mode of Honda and Toyota, is now common in the IRL.

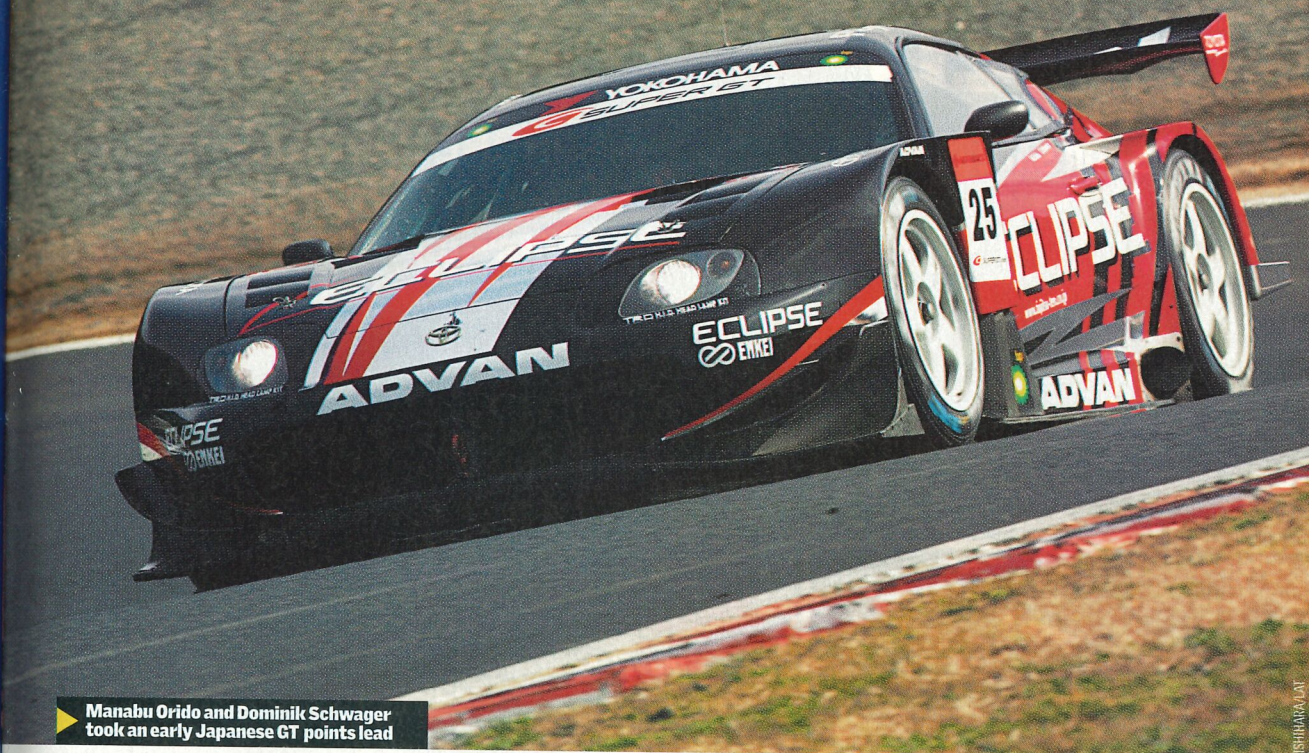
Critics contend the IRL has become 'CART Lite' – essentially the same principles, manufacturers and teams that existed five years ago in what is now known as the Champ Car World Series. Only five current IRL teams – Panther, Cheever, Dreyer & Reinbold, Foyt and Hemelgarn – could be considered original members.

"I don't think it can continue like this," warns Mike

Griffin, one of Panther's four co-owners. "GM felt like it was time to make a change. It wasn't in their business plan and they didn't have a budget to devote solely to this series. Lee White from Toyota has expressed that [the current form of the IRL] wasn't exactly what they signed up for and that they were going to have to take a hard look at continuing and on what level. If, God forbid, they decide to go away, that leaves only Honda. At that point, there's no competition. Do they even stay? Potentially, it could be a bad deal for everybody."



Eddie Cheever won the first IRL race with a GM engine in 1997



Manabu Orido and Dominik Schwager took an early Japanese GT points lead

JAPANESE SUPER GT

Okayama (J), March 27, Rd 1/7

ORIDO AND SCHWAGER PROFIT FROM LYONS' WOE

MANABU ORIDO and Dominik Schwager came through to a comfortable win in the opening round of the Japanese Super GT Championship on the re-named TI Aida track.

The Nismo Nissan Fairlady Z of Richard Lyons and Satoshi Motoyama had looked to be getting the better of the Orido/Schwager Toyota Supra after a long battle, but gearbox problems forced Lyons out of the lead and into retirement.

Michael Krumm put the Nissan

he shared with Masataka Yanagida on pole in the new single lap 'Super Lap' shoot-out.

It was Orido and Motoyama who made the early running though. Motoyama led first in the Nissan, before being passed in traffic by Orido in the Toyota.

Motoyama then regained the top spot before it was time to hand over to Lyons.

Lyons immediately set about building a bigger lead over Schwager and even managed to hold on to his advantage when he lost second gear and then third.

The Briton was eventually left with only one gear and the car was retired. "I was reluctant to give up after such a solid performance, but there was no other option," admitted Lyons.

That left Schwager in charge, chased by the TOM'S Supra of Takeshi Tsuchiya and James Courtney. The Australian closed in on Schwager over the balance of the race, but was still 3.494sec adrift at the flag.

Third place went to Toshihiro Kaneishi and Erik Comas in their Hasemi Motorsport Nissan. Kaneishi had moved the car up from ninth on the grid to fifth before handing over to the French veteran, who battled past two Hondas during his closing stint to secure the final podium slot.

Daisuke Ito and Ralph Firman brought the first of the revised Honda NSXs home fourth.

New front and rear bodywork and engine revisions have given the Honda 10 per cent more downforce and 10 per cent more power and the car showed the potential for stronger results, once it is a little better sorted.

■ by Jiro Takahashi

RESULTS 1 Manabu Orido/Dominik Schwager (Toyota Supra), 82 laps in 2h02m29.899s; 2 Takeshi Tsuchiya/James Courtney (Toyota), +3.494s; 3 Toshihiro Kaneishi/Erik Comas (Nissan Fairlady Z); 4 Daisuke Ito/Ralph Firman (Honda NSX); 5 Tsugio Matsuda/Andre Lotterer (Honda); 6 Tatsuya Kataoka/Sakon Yamamoto (Toyota); 7 Ryo Michigami/Takashi Kogure (Honda); 8 Andre Couto/Ronnie Quintarelli (Toyota); 9 Naoki Hattori/Shigekazu Wakisaka (Toyota); 10 Sébastien Philippe/Jérémie Dufour (Honda); etc. **Fastest lap** Satoshi Motoyama (Nissan), 1m26.350s. **Points** 1 Orido/Schwager, 22; 2 Tsuchiya/Courtney, 15; 3 Kaneishi/Comas, 12; 4 Ito/Firman, 9; 5 Matsuda/Lotterer, 6; Kataoka/Yamamoto, 5; 7 Michigami/Kogure, 4; 8 Couto/Quintarelli, 3; 9 Motoyama/Richard Lyons, Michael Krumm/Masataka Yanagida, & Hattori/Wakisaka, 2; etc.

FRENCH GT

Nogaro (F), March 27/28, Rd1/8

RAIN AND DELAYS THWART PROST

ALAIN PROST and Jean-Pierre Jabouille delighted the crowds with two solid runs as they returned to racing, but rain hampered their challenge and the wins went to the Dominique Dupuy/François Fiat (Saleen) and the Olivier Dupard/Patrice Goueslard (Viper).

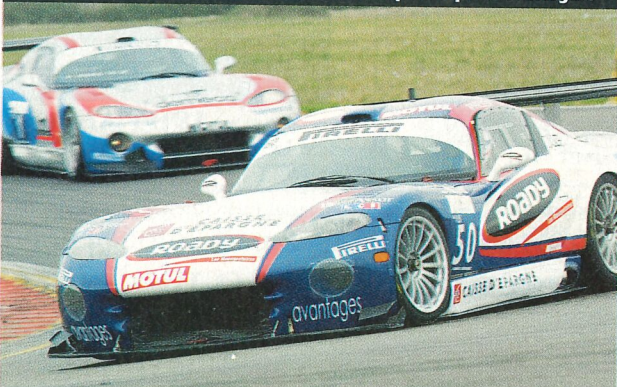
Dupard moved to the front 20 minutes into the initially wet first race, and Goueslard kept up the momentum to win as Prost struggled on wet tyres and dropped from third to sixth at the flag. Gabriel Balthazard and Jérôme Policand put in a stirring drive on slicks to bring their Ferrari 550 Maranello up from 21st to third place.

Dupuy ran a great first stint in race two to set up a win completed by Fiat, while a slow stop dropped the Prost car to sixth, before Jabouille battled up to fourth. Patrick Bornhauser and Olivier Thévenin were second in their Viper.

■ by Andrew Jewitt

RESULTS Race 1 1 Patrice Goueslard/Olivier Dupard (Chrysler Viper GTS-R), 36 laps in 1h00m31.723s; 2 Antoine Leclerc/Thierry Stepec (Chrysler), +1m27.955s; 3 Jérôme Policand/Gabriel Balthazard (Ferrari 550 Maranello); 4 Dany Snobeck/Yvan Lebon (Chrysler); 5 Olivier Thévenin/Patrick Bornhauser (Chrysler); 6 Alain Prost/Jean-Pierre Jabouille (Chrysler); etc. **Race 2** 1 François Fiat/Dominique Dupuy (Saleen S7R), 39 laps in 1h00m44.342s; 2 Thévenin/Bornhauser, +27.505s; 3 Mathieu Zangarelli/Gérard Bleyne (Chrysler); 4 Prost/Jabouille; 5 Anthony Beltoise/Jean-Luc Blanchermain (Chrysler); 6 Goueslard/Dupard; etc.

Alain Prost teamed up with Jean-Pierre Jabouille and secured a sixth and fourth place in the French GT Championship races at Nogaro



FRENCH SUPERTOURISME

Nogaro (F), March 27/28, Rd1/8

AYARI DOUBLES UP FOR PEUGEOT

SOHEIL AYARI bagged both wins as the Pescarolo Sport Peugeot 407s showed the way to a disappointing 11-car field.

Eric Hélary was on pole in the other 407 and led most of race one, but Ayari demoted him with two laps to go.

The Pescarolo duo made short work of the reverse-grid race two as well, with Ayari again finishing ahead of Hélary.

■ by Andrew Jewitt

RESULTS Race 1 1 Soheil Ayari (Peugeot 407), 16 laps in 25m17.064s; 2 Eric Hélary (Peugeot 407), +6.122s; 3 Grégory Guilvert (Peugeot 406 Coupé); 4 Eric Debard (Peugeot 406 Coupé); 5 Jean-Luc Beaubelique (Peugeot 406 Coupé); 6 Gilles Chatelain (Peugeot 406 Coupé); etc. **Race 2** 1 Ayari, 16 laps in 25m41.014s; 2 Hélary, +4.887s; 3 Guilvert; 4 Debard; 5 Chatelain; 6 Gilles Duquenne Opel (Astra Coupé); etc. **Points** 1 Ayari, 42; 2 Hélary, 31; 3 Guilvert, 24; 4 Debard, 20; 5 Chatelain, 14.

ARGENTINE TC2000

Paraná (RA), March 27, Rd 2/14

ROSSI LUCKS IN

SERIES NEWCOMER Matías Rossi scored victory in only his second TC2000 outing aboard one of the works Pro Racing Chevrolet Astras. The Formula Renault graduate hit the front when a trio battling for the lead went off on oil, and held on under pressure to the flag.

Gabriel Ponce de León led initially but by lap 10 the battle at the front was between Juan Manuel Silva's Honda Civic, Esteban



Matias Rossi kept his head as others spun to win in TC2000

Tuero (VW Polo) and Norberto Fontana in the Toyota Corolla, but on lap 14 that scrap came to an abrupt end after a spilt oil slick sent the pack spinning in all directions.

Rossi grabbed the lead and resisted Martín Basso's attack to the end.

■ by Tony Watson

RESULTS 1 Matías Rossi (Chevrolet Astra), 27 laps in 44m55.239s; 2 Martín Basso (Honda Civic), +0.857s; 3 Esteban Tuero (VW Polo); 4 Christian Ledesma (Chevrolet); 5 Oscar Fineschi (Honda Civic); 6 Nelson García (Ford Focus); etc. **FL** Gabriel Ponce de León (Ford), 1m34.574s (99.70mph). **Points** 1 Rossi, 29; 2 Emiliano Spataro, 23; 3 Ledesma, 20; 4 Basso, 16; 5 Guillermo Ortelí, 15; 6 Tuero, 14; etc.

NATIONAL

ALL THE NATIONAL & CLUB RACE, RALLY AND HISTORIC NEWS. PLUS FULL RESULTS ROUND-UP

REPORTS FROM

- ▶ **Britcar meeting:** Silverstone p104
- ▶ **HSCC meeting:** Donington Park p105
- ▶ **750 MC meeting:** Snetterton p106
- ▶ **BRSCC meeting:** Mallory Park p107
- ▶ **BRSCC meeting:** Castle Combe p108
- ▶ **BARC meeting:** Thruxton p109
- ▶ **BRSCC meeting:** Oulton Park p111

Asian Formula BMW competitors raced at Bahrain in one of last year's F1 support races

AUTOSPORT SAYS...

IF the World Final can become anything like the Formula Ford Festival (Brands Hatch's 1988 showcase is pictured below) once was, then it can only be a good thing for junior single-seater racing. BMW has a long-term commitment to the formula, so this event can be expected to remain part of the motorsport calendar. Provided there is help with transport costs, there should be a big turnout.



The choice of a Gulf venue for the winter race is not surprising and follows recent trends - the FIA GT Championship made its first visit to Dubai last year and Moto GP held a round in Qatar. Bahrain provided decent racing in its first Formula 1 race and unforgettable action in last year's F3 Superprix. Sadly, few witnessed it, as the region's citizens are still learning about life outside Formula 1.

The facilities at Sakhir are world-class, and BMW has chosen wisely - there's enough garage and paddock space for a vast field to be accommodated.

One concern, however, is that the track layout might dwarf the 140bhp motorcycle-engined Formula BMW cars. Even the F3 drivers complained that the track and its vast start/finish straight and wide turns were too big. Having said that, the amount of overtaking made for a great spectacle.

WILLIAMS F1 TEST FOR FBMW WINNER

▶ **BMW HAS** confirmed that the winner of its inaugural World Final event in Bahrain in December will receive the test chance of a lifetime in a BMW Williams F1 car.

In addition, the field of drivers drawn from the four Formula BMW championships currently run in Britain, Germany, Asia and the USA will fight for a \$60,000 (£33,000) purse at the event, to be held on December 16.

Full details of the four-day event's format have not been finalised, but it is understood that the entry will not be limited. Response from the British teams has been positive.

Carlin Motorsport Formula BMW boss Steve Hollman said: "It's wonderful - we all support international races. It's a good choice of venue given the time of the year, and Bahrain is about as central as you can get between all the championships."

"Survival will be key to victory. The idea reminds me of how the Formula Ford Festival

used to be - there could be 60 cars. Drivers will really have to use their brains."

Motaworld owner Alan Waite added: "It's a good idea and we'll definitely look at it. It should become a world showcase. It is a fantastic facility, and the only downside could be getting the equipment there. But that shouldn't be a problem if BMW help us out."

Reigning Formula BMW GB champion Tim Bridgman, who steps up to British Formula 3 this year, welcomed the initiative: "I'm going to try and get down there to watch it! There will be a lot of incentive pride-wise, as well as that chance of an F1 test."

"Watching 35 or 40 BMWs towing each other down the long straight and fighting for a Williams test is going to be awesome."

The Bahrain event follows the circuit's successful hosting of a GT Festival and Formula 3 Super Prix late last year. A return for F3 and GT is still under negotiation, but such races would be unlikely to take place on the

same weekend as the FBMW showdown.

▶ Andy Priaulx will demonstrate a BMW Williams F1 car at Rockingham's BMW Power Festival over the weekend of May 21/22. The weekend also features stand-alone rounds of the Formula BMW GB championship.



Bahrain's F3 event last December provided memorable race action

IN BRIEF

FFORD OPENS SITE

Organisers of the National Formula Ford Championship have launched an official website at www.formulaford.co.uk.

REES GETS READY

Peter Rees gained the final licence upgrade signature to move into Formula Renault UK with Scorpio Motorsport by racing an Iain Rowley FF2000 Delta (below) at Donington Park last Sunday. He also marshalled at Thruxton.



BLOSSON TOP

Series driver representative Martin Bloss led the way in Formula Renault BARC Championship Club Class testing at Snetterton last week. He lapped over half a second faster than Cameron Jackson, brother of German Formula BMW race winner Dominik.

GORNALL GOES CLIO

Former Formula Renault UK Championship driver James Gornall took his first laps in a Clio Cup car in last week's test at Snetterton. The 2003 FRenault BARC Champion, who is still trying to raise the budget to continue his single-seater career, set the 13th fastest time with Boulevard Team Racing. TCR driver Jonathan Adam topped the times overall.



JUNO TAKES A BOW

The new Juno SS3-V6 made its racing debut in last Saturday's Britsports/Gold Arts season-opener at Silverstone (above). Dave Mountain and Andreas Halkiopoulos battled oversteer to claim third place in the first race, but failed to finish the second.

ROBINSON'S FERRARI

Sometime British GT Championship driver Keith Robinson returned to the cockpit of a Ferrari in last Saturday's Britcar opener after the Corvette he was lined up to drive hit oil pressure problems in the week before the race. He was third in class 3 sharing Witt Gamski's 355.



MONSTER MOSLER

Eclipse Motorsport's new Mosler MT900R had its first outing at Donington Park last week, although its running was curtailed by a crash

MICK WALKER

ECLIPSE SWAPS CARS

ECLIPSE MOTORSPORT has been forced to borrow the 2003 British GT Championship-winning Mosler from European importer Martin Short after a mystery test crash sidelined its own MT900 ahead of this weekend's British series opener.

Piers Johnson lost control of the car on the approach to McLeans in testing at Donington Park. The team is still trying to establish the cause.

Eclipse boss John Griffiths said: "We still don't know what happened. We're going through all the data, but we can't find any reason for it."

"We should have the car fixed for the second

round, but big thanks go to Martin for letting us borrow his car. We've got our own engine and gearbox in it for Donington this weekend."

Johnson will drive in Sunday's two-hour endurance, although the identity of his partner is unknown. Shaun Balfe was a candidate early this week.

Meanwhile, Julian Westwood will return to full-time racing again this season when he shares a Team Parker Racing Porsche GT3 with Martin Rich.

Westwood said: "It's good to be racing again, and, touch wood, it should be for the whole year. Nowadays, racing has to fit in with my life, and this

does. I work with the team anyway as an engineer on their Carrera Cup programme.

"We've got a fair chance of winning in the GT3 class. Martin has a good turn of speed when he hangs it all together, so we've got as good a shot at the championship as anybody. It will all hang on a bit of luck and Martin gaining more experience."

The programme is the first foray into British GT racing for the TPR outfit.

Team boss Stuart Parker said: "It's a logical progression for the team. We want to keep developing. It's a standard car. We will start the season like that and take it from there."

DTM ASTRA MAKES BRITCAR BOW

STEVE HIRST'S Vauxhall Astra DTM car flew on its Britcar debut at Silverstone on Saturday, although its fuel-limited run to half-distance was compromised by driver errors.

The former DTM German touring car series machine qualified second and led from the start, before an off-track moment dropped Hirst down the field. He then made up ground after an early

safety car intervention to lead once more before going off again.

Hirst said: "It was lack of driving ability, simple as that. I went off more than once, and then [teammate] Ric Wood went off, too."

"But the car is bloody quick, especially in a straight line. We just need to learn how to drive it. We will be the business when we do."

The pair could only run for an

hour because the car is not equipped for refuelling. Hirst is planning to take advice on setting up the Astra to take on fuel in mid-race. Hirst and Wood plan to return for one or two more Britcar outings, although their main priority is the Dutch Supercar Challenge.

The car has also been invited to run at the Goodwood Festival of Speed in June.



Hirst was rapid, but had two offs in Britcar

MICK WALKER

BARBER OPENS SCORE

WESTLEY BARBER kicked off his French Formula Renault title bid with a win and a fifth place at Nogaro last weekend.

The Comtec Racing driver followed up his solid fifth in race one with a lights-to-flag victory in the second race. Despite his performance, Graff Racing's Laurent Groppi leads the points standings after taking a win and a second place.

Barber's Comtec team-

mate, Pippa Mann, who raced in British FRenault last year, was 18th and 31st in the two events.

Former Formula BMW frontrunner Philip Glew also made his French Formula Renault debut after securing a late deal to return to the category he last raced in in 2003. He was unable to start the second race after failing to finish the opener.

MAZDA CLASS OF FIELD

MAZDA'S NEW works-backed RX-8 won its class on its Production S1 debut at Silverstone's European Endurance Racing Club opener.

Formula Woman champion Natasha Firman and Mark Ticehurst piloted the Guglielmi Motorsport-prepared car to Class C victory and fifth overall, although Firman's late spin at Luffield meant she almost lost out to Ben Salmon's Honda Civic-R.

Firman said: "I can't quite believe it—it's an amazing result. The only problems were the seat coming loose and getting stuck in third gear for the last three laps."

Ticehurst said: "Mazda are over the moon, and rightly so. The car performed brilliantly from start to finish, with consistently fast pace once we were in clean air. I'm really pleased, considering it's the car's first run in competition."

WINROW TO RACE CLIOS

FORMER SEAT Cupra Championship racer Ben Winrow has signed up for the Renault Clio Cup with Total Control Racing.

The 19-year-old from Northamptonshire did the deal last week after an impressive outing for the team during official testing for the series at Snetterton.

Winrow, a former Caterham Academy champion, had a one-off race at Donington Park last September, and decided to make a full-time switch to Clios.

He said: "The test went very well indeed, and I'm looking forward to

racing in the Clio Cup this season. I looked at doing another season in SEAT, but the budget is too unrealistic. The Clio Cup is much more cost-effective.

"The cars are great fun to drive, and having adapted to the Clio so quickly, I'm confident we can be right up there throughout the year, regularly challenging for podiums and, hopefully, race wins."

There was another ex-Cupra racer in action at Snetterton. Stephen Colbert was sixth fastest for Mardi Gras Motorsport. Team-mate Amy Chambers completed just three laps before rolling her Clio.



Winrow briefly raced a Clio last year for Aurok

HOHENTHAL ON TOP AGAIN IN FRENALUT

SEBASTIAN Hohenthal underlined his status as a title contender in the Formula Renault UK Championship by last week topping the testing timesheets for the third time.

Four weeks ago, the Swede set a new outright Formula Renault UK lap record at Snetterton, and was fastest again last week when testing at the Norfolk circuit.

Hohenthal's best time was nearly three-tenths quicker than Fortec Motorsport team-

mate Stuart Hall, who, despite an inconsistent pre-season, is sure to be in contention for the championship after winning the Winter Series in November.

Team aka driver James Jakes was third fastest, ahead of aka stablemate Alex Storckenfeldt, and Stephen Simpson of Team JLR.

The final test before the season gets under way is at Thruxton on April 1, ahead of the opening round at Donington Park on April 9/10.

ONE TO WATCH
SEBASTIAN HOHENTHAL



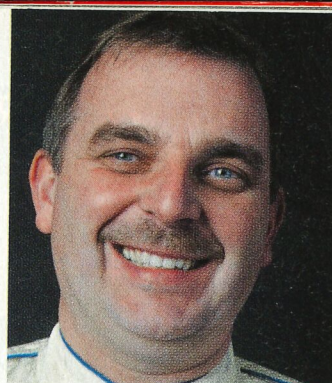
THE TOP of the timesheets in Formula Renault UK testing has been hogged for most of the pre-season by an unexpected name.

Sebastian Hohenthal has overshadowed his Fortec Motorsport team-mate, Winter Series champion Stuart Hall, who is hotly tipped as title favourite.

Hohenthal signed for Fortec's Renault squad without much hype, perhaps because he didn't manage to win a race on his way to fourth place in the UK Formula Ford Championship last year.

The Swede does know how to win, though, having lifted the Nordic FFord and UK FFord Winter Championships in 2003.

Now armed with knowledge of the British circuits and a team renowned for getting the best out of its drivers, Hohenthal could spring a surprise if he can learn to race the cars around him.



HUMBLE PYE

MARCUS PYE

"THIS WAS RACING OF THE OLD SCHOOL, AND FOR THE HELL OF IT"

THE EASTER HOLIDAY is always eagerly anticipated among racing-starved fans, for it is when the season really takes off. Alas, Thruxton's Formula 2 International is history, but I'm happy to report that on last weekend's evidence, parts of Britain's club scene are vibrant.

Easter came early this year, and while Sunday's HSCC championship curtain-raiser at Donington and Monday's BRSCC South West opener at Castle Combe were very different weather-wise, the cream of the action was first class. Which augurs well for the months ahead.

Pre-1972 Formula Ford 1600 produced sensational racing, authentic to the period, at a freezing cold Donington. While one yellow flag scenario split what was building into a stellar lead battle, a subsequent infringement was as crass as the decision not to have marshals gridding the cars properly. It may have saved time, but the formations were a shambles. And Derek Bell Trophy cars need staggered grids...

Another race which lifted the gloom was the Classic F3 encounter, in which debutant Alex Ames drove an untested Chevron B38 – collected from Germany the previous week – to a tremendous second place. A useful if not super-successful Formula Fordster, the 25-year-old demonstrated the progression to which predecessors of the '70s aspired. Then a multi-marque class, it was so much more interesting than today's equivalent. Watch Alex, he will win races this year!

Once thick fog lifted to reveal a sun-bathed Combe in all its verdant splendour, and hungry racegoers lining the banks, there were more treats in store the following day.

Again a debutant stole the show on the local

stage. Sprinter Keith Murray's victory in the popular resident saloon series opener brought plaudits to the Audi A4 Quattro pilot. When Gary Prebble and Nick Mizen return in their swift Rover Tomcats, with Mark Wyatt's Vauxhall Astra and the screaming Peugeot 206s of Brian and Ilsa Cox, it could be one of the country's best championships.

But it was the Top Hat organisation's brand of Historic events which really caught the imagination. A sensational saloon car entry did not disappoint in the first hour-long race, and the Cloth Cap sportscar equivalent provided one of the finest battles for many a year, with three local favourites in its midst.

Charting the titanic tussle which embroiled DD300, the ex-Le Mans Austin-Healey 3000 of Julian Bronson/Chris Clarkson, fellow Bristolian Ted Williams in his newly-acquired Chevrolet Corvette and Michael Steele in VPA 9, the HWM-Jaguar which Australian Tony Gaze raced in the '50s, could have filled my report on its own!

Steele eventually won eighth place by four tenths of a second from Clarkson, but the cars constantly swapped places, without trading paint! And their drivers emerged beaming, to slap each other on the back – not round the chops, like today's professionals seek to do – which was a joy for all to behold. This was racing of the old school, and for the hell of it. The audience appreciated that.



Fans lined the banks at Castle Combe where they enjoyed saloon and historic racing action



NATIONAL ROUND-UP

T CAR MAN MOVES TO VW RACING CUP
DAN THACKERAY will become the Volkswagen Racing Cup's youngest driver after signing up to race a Saxon Motorsport-prepared Corrado VR6.

The 16-year-old was voted Driver of the Year in last year's T Car Championship, finishing third in his maiden season.

He said: "Most people my age want to be in Formula 1, but I am realistic enough to know that is unlikely. I want to race touring cars, and this is the best place to learn."

PONS TO JOIN RENAULT EURO CUP
TOP RENAULT World Series team Pons Racing will run two cars in the supporting Formula Renault Eurocup this season.

Pons, which helped Heikki Kovalainen to the title last season, will field cars for Spaniards Dani Clos and Miguel Molina. Both drivers are sponsored by the Circuit de Catalunya.

Prema driver Kamui Kobayashi was fastest over two days of testing for the series at the Le Mans Bugatti circuit last week. Westley Barber, the only Briton to attend, was 21st.

WINGFIELD LOOKS FOR LATE DEBUT
JAMES WINGFIELD is set for a late start to the year in either Formula BMW or Formula Renault after the Donington Park TOCA season-opener on April 9/10.

Wingfield is in discussions with BMW outfit Pegasus Motorsport and Renault UK regular entrant Falcon Motorsport to join either championship at Thruxton on April 30/May 1. He and his backers will be at Donington to evaluate the two series.

IN BRIEF

BUTCHER'S OPEN

Keith Butcher will race an ex-Cirtek Motorsport Porsche 911 GT3-RS in the Porsche Open series this year. The 2000-vintage car was originally run by Dick Barbour Racing in the American Le Mans Series.

THORNTON'S F3 BMW

BMW Heidegger power made its Classic Formula 3 debut at Donington last Sunday in Tom Thornton's Argo J1M3. The former 750MC Kit Car racer acquired the ex-Bruno Eichmann chassis, which replaces his March 743, from Germany.

ATLANTIC CROSSING

Mike Campbell-Cole returned to the cockpit of a Formula Atlantic car for the first time in 33 years at Donington Park last Sunday. He finished 10th in the Derek Bell Trophy in a Brabham BT40 (below).

ROY DEMPSTER

**MONSON'S 19F**

John Monson gave his ex-Ken Fildes Crossle 19F its debut in the Derek Bell Trophy race at Donington Park last Sunday.

LUKE IN HARNESS

Luke Clark-Bagnall, 16, acquitted himself well in father Adam Bagnall's triple '70s Road Sports title-winning Triumph GT6 with third in class on his debut.

SCOTTISH LEGENDS

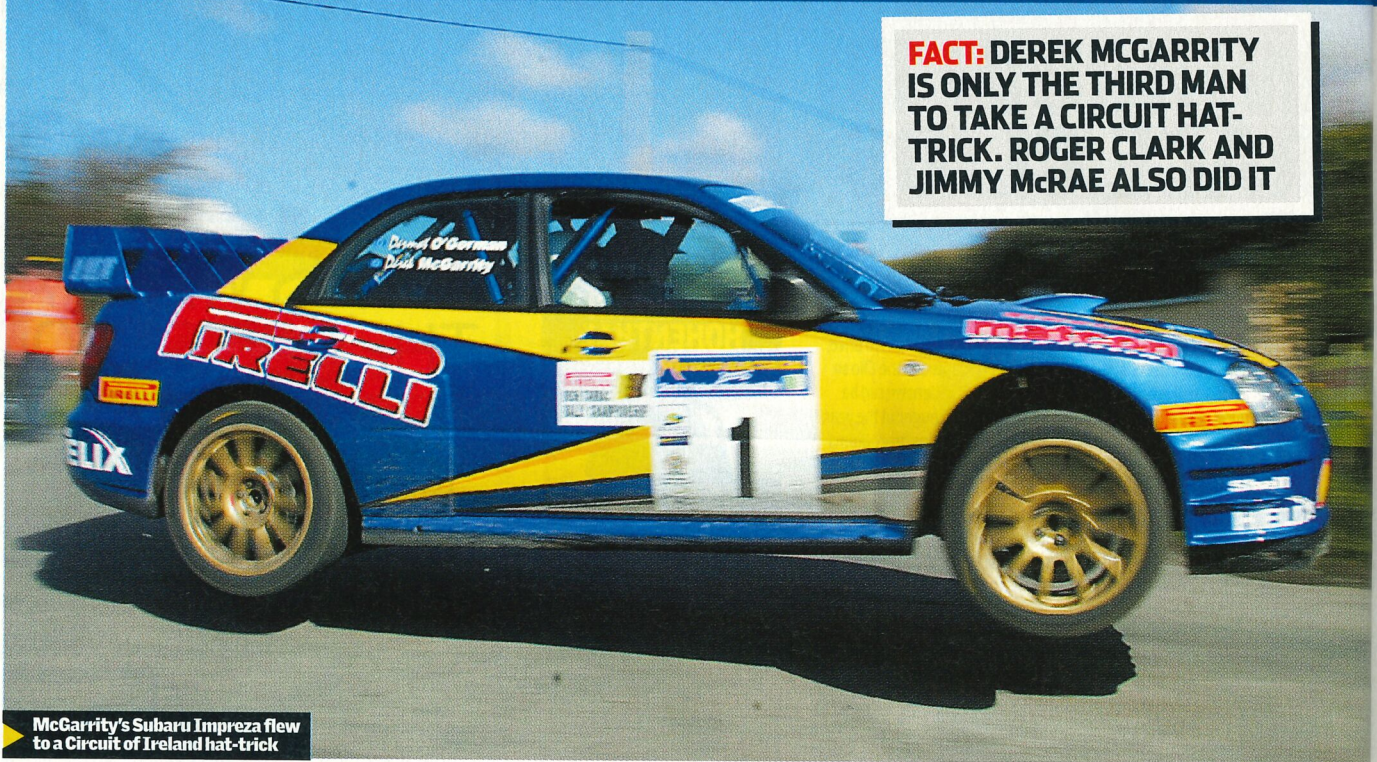
A further five graduates from the Scottish Legends Championship will join reigning champion Derek Pierce in the National series this year. Winter champion Dave Newsham, Chris Greive, Daniel Clark and Jeff Stewart will all make the move.

PHOENIX RISING

A series of races for single-seaters of 1959-'89 vintage will be staged by the Scottish Motor Racing Club at Knockhill this year. Only cars without aerodynamic aids can be run, with early '60s F1 cars, Formula Ford 1600s and Formula Vauxhalls expected to compete.

STOCKTON BOW

Ex TVR Tuscan and GT racer Chris Stockton made his Silhouette debut at Oulton Park in a Peugeot 206. The car is the first of the class, with Duratec 2 litre engines powering a CDL built chassis that can take either the Peugeot or Ford Puma shells.



McGarrity's Subaru Impreza flew to a Circuit of Ireland hat-trick

FACT: DEREK MCGARRITY IS ONLY THE THIRD MAN TO TAKE A CIRCUIT HAT-TRICK. ROGER CLARK AND JIMMY McRAE ALSO DID IT

McGARRITY'S HAT-TRICK



DEREK MCGARRITY completed a hat-trick of Circuit of Ireland victories after holding off a late challenge from the delayed Andrew Nesbitt.

McGarrity, driving a Subaru Impreza WRC S9 and co-driven by Dermot O'Gorman, headed into the final stage at St Angelo with less than three seconds in hand over Nesbitt and co-driver James O'Brien. However, Nesbitt slid into a slurry pit while trying to close the gap, ultimately losing by 18.2 seconds.

Nesbitt led throughout the first day of the rally before hitting a chicane and then suffering

clutch problems on Sunday's opening stage. Nesbitt was unimpressed at losing time in the chicane, which he claimed was not set up as indicated in the official event road book.

He reclaimed top spot on stage 11, but then suffered a right-rear puncture and dropped back to third behind both McGarrity and the Toyota Corolla WRC of Eugene Donnelly. He reclaimed second when Donnelly retired on the third day with a broken differential, but was denied a remarkable comeback by his last-stage off.

McGarrity, who suffered his own misfortunes in the rally after damaging a wheel early in the

event, said: "To be honest I thought we were going to get it from Cookstown on. My luck had changed for the better, with the damaged wheel and the Pirelli tyre not going down."

Eamonn Boland and Francis Reagan were third in their Subaru Impreza WRC, with Austin MacHale — one of the pre-event favourites — taking fifth in his Ford Focus WRC after battling a number of car problems on the first day.

Garry Jennings marked his first Circuit of Ireland finish with Group N victory and seventh overall in his Mitsubishi Lancer, holding off Alan Nesbitt's Impreza.



FLEETWOOD IN CIRCUIT DEBUT

DOUBLE British Hillclimb Champion Adam Fleetwood made his circuit racing debut at Silverstone last Saturday.

Fleetwood exchanged his more familiar Gould-NME XB GR55 for a vastly less potent Van Diemen Formula Ford machine, claiming a second and a fifth place.

Fleetwood, who completed the races in pursuit of a National A

licence to contest a round of the Porsche Carrera Cup GB in the Autosport-backed VIP car, said: "I really enjoyed it. I didn't make the most of qualifying — with 26 cars out there, the track was crowded! Although being in the mix in the second race was more helpful for experience."

Fleetwood will also defend his British hillclimb crown this year.

TAJIMA MONSTERS RACE TO THE SKY FOR SIXTH WIN

NOBUHIRO "Monster" Tajima took his sixth win in New Zealand's Race to the Sky hillclimb at the weekend.

The Japanese driver took his Suzuki V6 turbo hillclimb special up the nine-mile Southern Alps course in 8m10.844s — a time

more than 11 seconds ahead of former World Rally ace Kenneth Eriksson.

Swedish driver Eriksson drove a highly-modified Subaru Impreza that was originally earmarked for sadly-missed local hero Possum Bourne, and

earned a nine-second advantage over Kiwi Mitsubishi star Andrew Hawkeswood.

Californian-based New Zealander and Pikes Peak record-holder Rod Millen was close behind in fourth in a Toyota Tundra V8 truck.



Tajima 'monsters' the Suzuki to his sixth win

OBITUARY

ALAN BARR 1958-2005

SCOTTISH RALLYING was in a state of shock at the weekend following the unexpected announcement of the death of Alan Barr.

He collapsed at the wheel while competing on the Border Counties Rally the previous weekend and, despite the prompt and efficient attention from spectators, paramedics, the rescue helicopter crew and doctors and staff at Newcastle General Hospital, Alan passed away in the early hours of last Friday morning.

From the moment he switched to four wheels from two in 1993, Alan quickly became one of the most popular and likeable characters on the rallying scene. Even when things were going wrong the smile and the fun were never far away.

Like many, he started with a Ford Escort MkII before switching to a series of Subaru Imprezas. One of his most cherished achievements was winning the AK Stevenson Trophy on the 1998 Network Q RAC Rally for the top-placed Scottish driver overall.

His passion for the sport was expressed in other areas too, where he supported a number of initiatives to help youngsters get started in the sport and sponsored the Albar Kames Trophy Rally, an event aimed at the inexperienced and the newcomer.

Alan was a generous and gentle man, and to Moira, Ashley and Pamela, his family, and wide circle of friends both within and outside rallying and motorsport, Autosport extends its deepest sympathy.

DORAN IMPRESSED

PAT DORAN finished an encouraging fifth on the debut of his new Fiesta-based Supercar in the opening round of the British Rallycross Championship at Lydden Hill on Easter Monday.

Despite never having driven the car before it arrived at Lydden, Doran set the second best time of the day in the third qualifying heat, and was impressed by the performance of the brand-new MDV-built machine.

Doran said: "The turbo hose

came off in the first and second heat so I just had to drive round with no power. But it was okay in the third and it was the first time I was able to really get going.

"There's so much grip in the corners, it's absolutely amazing, but it's given us a problem because I need to be half-a-gear higher everywhere than normal so we need to get some different ratios sorted out."

The car's next appearance is due to be at Mondello Park on April 24.



Doran was delighted with his new Fiesta rallycrosser

HALSBURY GT BREAKS COVER

FORMER British GT racer Ben McLoughlin gave the Halsbury 05 Special GT car its debut at Castle Combe on Monday.

Designed by Nick Taylor, the wishbone-suspended spaceframe car is powered by a turbocharged Suzuki GSX-R motorcycle engine.

A recurrent oil temperature problem forced its early retirement, but not before McLoughlin had run fifth in the lead group headed by Norman Lackford's Saxon-BDA.

"We had wanted to build our own car for a long time," said Bristol-based Taylor. "Ben was the only driver mad enough to take us on."

The aluminium body is styled after the immortal Porsche 917/10 that raced in Can-Am during the early '70s.

MURRAY SHAKES UP COMBE

RACE debutant Keith Murray upset Castle Combe's saloon establishment by winning Monday's National Mobile Windscreens championship opener in his Audi A4 Quattro.

The 43-year-old also scooped the Driver of the Day award, having beaten the Subaru Impreza of Combe regular Steve Turvey.

Murray, who previously sprinted a 750bhp, short-wheelbase Quattro, started building the A4 at Christmas, specifically for the local series.

"What a start. Does it get better than this?" said Murray.

Spectators are already anticipating the confrontation between the A4 and former champion Gary Prebble's Rover 220 Turbo in future rounds.

NATIONAL GALLERY

> CLUB MOTORSPORT IN PICTURES



CATERHAM CLASH Graham Smith (142) and David Pearson (127) come face to face in the Caterham Graduate opener at Thruxton on Easter Monday. The pair collided at the final chicane in a chain reaction caused by the race-leader running wide a few moments before



GT GT BANGBANG Ben McLoughlin gave the new Suzuki bike-powered Halsbury Special GT car its debut at Castle Combe on Monday. The car ran fifth before oil temperature woes intervened



COMBE SHROUD Events were delayed by fog at Combe on Easter Monday



MACHALE TRIUMPH Gareth MacHale won last Sunday's Tipperary Forest Stages. The Toyota Corolla WRC driver beat the similar car of John McCarthy



FRIENDS REUNITED Former BTCC champion Tim Harvey showed off his Sierra RS500 at Mallory on Easter Monday

NATIONAL ROUND-UP

ZANARDI PROTEGE INJURED IN ITALY

KARTER Martin Plowman suffered serious injuries after crashing in the Italian Open International Championship at Lonato last Saturday.

Plowman went off on a patch of water at the ultra-fast first corner, hitting the barrier and another driver standing close by after crashing earlier.

Plowman underwent surgery to a punctured lung, and is expected to remain in Italy for three more weeks before returning home.

WILLIS SETS PACE AT HAREWOOD

TREVOR Willis set the fastest time of the day in Harewood's opening Hillclimb event of the season in his OMS CF04.

Willis was one of five OMS drivers to make the top ten in taxing conditions, with a greasy track surface throughout the day, beating the similar, 1300cc Suzuki Hayabusa-powered machine of OMS boss Steve Owen.

Mike Smyth rolled his Sylva Striker on the Quarry Straight, but emerged unscathed despite heavy car damage.

BLAKENEY SHOWS PROMISING FORM

PAT Blakeney put his JRP-engined Vector MG95 on pole for Monday's Castle Combe FF1600 opener, only for the car to be sidelined on lap one.

An early tap from Tim Reynolds sent Blakeney spinning on Avon Rise, and a subsequent contretemps ripped a corner from the car. But Blakeney rewarded his crew's tremendous effort in repairing it by finishing sixth in the finale from the back of the grid.

'ELL 'EEZ ON FIRE!

Lotus Elise driver Barrie Whight had to abandon the blazing car early in Silverstone's Britcar race. The trouble was traced to a punctured oil cooler.





The Vauxhall Astra DTM took an early lead in the Britcar opener

SILVERSTONE INTERNATIONAL BRITCAR

March 26
LESLIE HAMMERS POINTS HOME

DAVID LESLIE and Harry Handkammer picked up where they left off last year by taking the opening Britcar clash in their rebuilt BMW M3 at Silverstone. On a drizzly afternoon, the pair saw off some faster opposition in the form of the colourful Vauxhall Astra DTM and the Parr Motorsport Porsche, each of which lacked the all-round driving ability of the 2004 category winners.

The race began dry, with Handkammer lining up seventh, though that effectively became sixth when the Neil and Geoffrey Waterworth Dodge Viper failed to take up its fourth-placed grid slot. Kelvin Burt had put the Parr GT3 Cup entry on pole by more than a second, but Burt knew as well as anyone that he would be handing his car over to partner Bill Cameron, who was running in his very first race.

Burt lost the lead to the Astra before Copse. The DTM car was not equipped for refuelling and never planned to run for longer than an hour, but Steve Hirst's early pace will surely make competitors try and keep a decent rig far away from the German flyer.

Burt had re-taken the lead by Priority, though the Astra was keeping

the Porsche in sight until Hirst had it on the grass on the third lap. It was the first of several unforced errors that kept the car out of the hunt from then on, though it did take another brief spell at the front.

"I ran out of driving ability and fell off under braking," admitted Hirst. "Ricky [Wood] went off too after we changed, but the car was perfect."

On lap four Burt's 10 second lead was erased by the presence of the safety car. Barrie Whight had to ferry a flaming Lotus Elise back to the pits, where marshals extinguished the fiery motor.

Racing began again on lap 14, with Burt and Hirst (about to fall off again) pulling clear of Handkammer and Craig Cole's Ferrari. Cole was doing well in what was his and his co-driving brother

Elliott's car racing debut.

Behind that was a battle between Philip Harris's Porsche, Terry Coleman's Ferrari and the pair of Topcats Marcos Mantis machines.

By lap 25 Burt's lead had grown to 32 seconds – though Cole remained within striking distance of Handkammer. Another safety car period on lap 29 again undid most of Burt's work and signalled a chance for most of the field to pit.

That meant driver changes and it was always going to be asking a lot to expect Cameron to hold off David Leslie for over an hour. The Porsche's lead did not survive the first lap back under green, and fellow debutant Elliott Cole also slipped through immediately. Ian Flux was hunting down Cameron for third too, after the safety car had left

him almost a lap down at the restart.

Leslie was barely threatened during the second half of the race, with a pleasant cushion to his name as rain came on lap 43. It was barely noticeable precipitation though, which could be why Jon Harrison got caught out at Woodcote corner on lap 45. Harrison walked away from the shunt, but he'd certainly beaten the Marcos' left side about when it whacked the concrete wall. The incident triggered a third safety car, which meant it was as good a time as any for the leaders to come in and grab more appropriate rubber.

The order was unchanged after the pitstops and pace car period, though Flux had again lost a lap after overtaking Cameron. He was unable to catch the Porsche man

either, as Cameron excelled in the wet and kept very close to Leslie's times. He was rewarded at the very end by a gentle off and resultant pitstop from Cole, which gave Cameron a satisfying second place and the Class 1 victory.

The Harris/Nigel Greensall Porsche had had trouble fixing a wheel and lost several laps solving the problem, which meant John George's strong charge past the remaining Mantis would give him and Phil Bennett fifth overall and the class victory.

Leslie cruised to a slightly early chequered flag as the noise curfew approached, saying afterwards: "We've got two drivers of similar pace, and we stayed on the road while some of the others didn't. It was a good solid race – just how we did it last year."

Production S1 ran a separate race, as will be customary this year, and, although it was dry, this was an equally entertaining encounter.

Ultimately, nobody could live with the pole-sitting BMW of Nigel Stephens and Mark Smith, though had the sister car – started by the very same Smith and due to be handed over to David Cuff – not lost time in the garage on lap 17 with technical ailments, it would have mounted a serious challenge.

That meant that second position was settled in favour of Chris Nicholas, who was unable to prevent Stephens stretching his lead to almost 50 seconds just before the single round of stops.

The driver change led to further

Nigel Stephens leads Chris Nicholas early in Production S1



MICK VALUER

on-track excitement however.

Stephens was the last of the leaders to bring his car in and, when Smith took over, he found that Andreas Demetriou had been making substantial gains. There was a surge of interest as the gap dropped to the 13-second mark before Smith re-established a comfort zone and held it all the way to the end.

Solo runner Rick Kraemer brought his Ford Focus home third, two places ahead of the Class C-winning Mazda RX8 of Natasha Firman and Mark Ticehurst. Firman had done well to guide the car to a tense debut win over a threatening Ben Salmon, despite a late spin and a sticking gearbox on the final three laps of the race.

Ian Flux was a surprised aggregate winner of the Britsports & Gold Arts contest, which was run over two sprints of 45 minutes either side of the lunch break.

A fifth and a second was just the kind of consistency Fluxie's rivals could not muster. The Setters pairing won the first race but their Jade was feeling (and sounding) sickly in the second encounter and it finished a lap down.

Austin Kinsella took his Radical SR8 to a convincing win in the second part, but overall victory was impossible after he had retired from the first event. He'd slowed suddenly exiting Abbey and got hit from behind by the unsuspecting Dominic Lesniewski, whose late-stopping strategy left him just two seconds short of the winning Jade before a nondescript second race effort in the afternoon.

■ by Richard Asher

BRITCAR (2 HOURS) 1 David Leslie/Harry Handkammer (BMW M3 E36) 66 laps in 1h56m55.547s (76.19mph); 2 Bill Cameron/Kelvin Burt (Porsche GT3 Cup) 1h57m58.973s; 3 Craig Cole/Elliott Cole (Ferrari 360 Modena GT); 4 Ian Flux/Terry Coleman (Ferrari 360 Challenge); 5 John George/Phil Bennett (Peugeot 406 Coupé); 6 Mick Mercer/Richard Fores (Marcos Mantis). **Class winner** Cameron/Burt; George/Bennett. **Fastest lap** Steve Hirst/Rick Woods (Vauxhall Astra DTM) 1m25.262s (94.95mph).

PRODUCTION S1 (2 HOURS) 1 Nigel Stephens/Mark Smith (BMW M3 E30) 73 laps in 2h00m28.958s (81.78mph); 2 Andreas Demetriou/Chris Nicholas (Honda Integra R) 2h00m45.482s; 3 Rick Kraemer (Ford Focus); 4 Kevin Wells/Desmond Smail (Honda Civic Type R); 5 Natasha Firman/Mark Ticehurst (Mazda RX8); 6 Ben Salmon (Honda Civic R). **CW** Firman/Ticehurst; Mercer/Bennett Baggs (MG ZR). **FL** Stephens/Smith 1m35.165s (85.07mph).

BRITSPORTS & GOLDARTS (90 MINUTES) 1 Ian Flux/Michael Christophe (Radical ProSport) 64 laps in 1h33m05.352s; 2 Duncan Williams/Pluck (Radical ProSport) 1h34m31.069s; 3 Doug Setters/Chris Setters (Jade Trackstar); 4 Dominic Lesniewski/Adrian Holey (Juno SS3); 5 Jonathan Potts/Peter Hobday (Chiron); Simon Fish (Radical SR3). **FL** Andreas Demetriou (Radical SR8) 1m20.608s (100.44mph). **PART 1 (45 MINUTES)** 1 Setters/Setters 32 laps in 45m52.238s; 2 Lesniewski/Holey 45m54.431s; 3 David Mountain/Andreas Halkiopoulos; 4 Potts/Hobday; 5 Christopher/Flux; 6 Duncan Williams/Martin Flux. **FL** Demetriou 1m20.608 (100.44mph). **PART 2 (45 MINUTES)** 1 Austin Kinsella (Radical SR8) 32 laps in 46m10.221s; 2 Christopher/Flux 46m22.676s; 3 Austin Reynolds/Nick Padmore (Radical SR8); 4 Williams/Pluck; 5 Setters/Setters; 6 Potts/Hobday. **FL** Demetriou 1m20.971s (99.99mph).

DONINGTON PARK HSCC

March 27

MAXTED DOMINATES CHILLY DONINGTON



GLOOMY, bitterly cold and grippless Donington may have been, but Steve Maxted's Classic

Formula 3 victory over inspired debutant Alex Ames and a scintillating Formula Ford 1600 race highlighted Sunday's Historic Sports Car Club season opener.

Maxted zapped his Argo JM6 past Richard Trott's Ralt RT1 in traffic on lap four, by which time Ames had worked his Chevron B38 up from fifth to third. Ames dived boldly inside Trott at McLeans on lap eight, and closed on Maxted to the chequered flag.

The FF2000 class was equally exciting, for Reynard veteran Jan Langdon jumped the start, then made up the 10 second penalty to depose Paul Smith (Jamun).

Triple champion Neil Fowler and Nelson Rowe slugged it out at the head of the FF1600 race, way clear of the pack once it got stuck behind Bernard Cox's Lola under yellows at the Old Hairpin.

After several order changes – and a touch or two – Rowe found excellent drive out of Redgate two laps from home. He looked composed until a backmarker squeezed him out at Schwantz Curve on the final lap and Fowler used his extra momentum to snatch the win.

Behind them, Jason Minshaw, Simon Hadfield, John Pearson, Paul Sleeman and Nigel Bancroft had one hell of a scrap, passing and repassing each other. Sleeman spun, and the desperate Bancroft shot past all three remaining rivals under yellows into the chicane. Pearson, meanwhile, pipped Hadfield for third at the last gasp.

Despite a baulky gearbox on the run to Redgate, which dropped him to fifth, poleman Graeme Dodd led the Jaguar XK event by the chicane, where erstwhile pacesetter Rob Newall found his coupé reluctant to slow.

Nigel Webb chased Dodd relentlessly, while Newall regained third when Graham Bull had a hairy spin down the Craner Curves. Newall saw Trevor Groom getting larger in his mirrors until Groom fell off at Redgate.

The same gravel trap caught out '70s Road Sports class polesitter Sarah Hutchison's Lancia Beta, amid a furious dice with the Alfetta GTVs of William Morton and winner Mark Oldfield.

The main corps of '70s Road Sports were headed throughout by Charles Barter, whose ever-precise style in the Datsun 240Z was rewarded. After Matthew Bannister spun his 240Z at Redgate, Barter's son Julian moved his TVR into

second. The family one-two was denied, however, when Richard Thorne spun his Morgan in Julian's path at the chicane, having just bored his way past, and Alan Harper profited in his Lotus Elan.

Dodd, now in his Jaguar Mk2, found unexpected pressure in the Saloon race from Roger Cope, his Jaguar S-type now snorting through triple Weber 48DCOE carbs. When Cope ran out of brakes at the chicane, Dan Cox's flame-spitting Anglia attacked.

As Dodd's tyres faded, Cox moved in for the kill, diving past into the Old Hairpin. Cox left just enough room for the Jag on the outside, but Dodd found a slower car in the way and spun. He resumed, still ahead of son James's third-placed Alfa, but Cox gleefully repeated last year's win.

Neil Wood had a busy time carving his Anglia through stiff opposition for fourth. But the big surprise was among the tiddlers, where Singer Chamois pilot Alan Kitson inflicted a rare defeat on multiple-champion Adrian Oliver. Kitson's Impspeed car had been under attack by Mike Hanna's Imp until it threw a conrod.

Back from an enforced layoff, Laurence Bailey was happy with Historic Road Sports honours in his TVR Griffith. When pursuers Robin Gray (Jaguar E) and Chris Burbury (Triumph TR5) collided heavily at McLeans, Nigel Webb bagged second, and held on under increasing pressure from Aussie Justin Murphy's Milano-Holden and Andy Shepherd's Lotus 7. Mike Eagles tore back to fifth after an off, and set fastest lap in his Milano.

The first attempt to run the Derek Bell Trophy was red-flagged on lap two when seventh-placed Tim Barry spun his March 76A at Redgate, triggering a seven-car incident. Four of them restarted, but when poleman Ian Giles spun his F5000 Eagle on the Redgate ice rink, leader Simon Hadfield eased off in his Chevron B37 to take a straightforward win over teammate Stuart Tilley's Atlantic Modus.



Maxted (1) had to battle with Neil Dunkel (2) and Alex Amews (38) in Classic F3

MICK WALKER

Matthew Watts dominated the Classic Racing Cars event, in which favourite Steve Worrad (Brabham BT30) had a nasty surprise approaching the chicane on the first lap. "I touched the brakes and it swapped ends," he said.

Michael Schryver kept his Formula Junior Lotus 22 ahead of Ian Gray's F2 Brabham BT30 for second, while Greg Thornton triumphed in a four-way FF1600 class shoot-out, bringing his rare Titan Mk4 home a fine sixth.

Try as Jamie Boot did in his TVR Griffith, there was no denying invitation class runner David Clark a debut Classic Sports Car victory in his restored Elva-BMW Mk8.

■ by Marcus Pye

HSCC CLASSIC F3 (12 LAPS) 1 Steve Maxted (Argo JM6) 15m23.856s (91.40mph); 2 Alex Ames (Chevron B38) 15m24.156s; 3 Richard Trott (Ralt RT1); 4 Neil Dunkel (Argo JM3); 5 Julian Baldwin (March 783); 6 John Bradshaw (Argo JM1). **Class Winners** Jan Langdon (Reynard SF78); Gareth Walters (Palliser WDF3). **Fastest Lap** Maxted 1m14.552 (152.10mph).

HSCC LEGENDS RACING HISTORIC FF1600 (11 LAPS) 1 Neil Fowler (Lola T200) 15m08.148s (85.22mph); 2 Nelson Rowe (Croselle 20F) 15m08.291s; 3 John Pearson (Merlyn Mk11A); 4 Simon Hadfield (Merlyn Mk20); 5 Nigel Bancroft (Croselle 20F); 6 Jason Minshaw (Merlyn Mk20). **FL** Rowe 1m20.393s (87.64mph).

HSCC DEREK BELL TROPHY (8 LAPS) 1 Hadfield (Chevron-Chevrolet B37) 10m03.475s (93.22mph); 2 Stuart Tilley (Modus-BDA M1) 10m27.201s; 3 Ian Giles (Eagle-Chevrolet FA74); 4 James Murray (Brabham-BDA BT36); 5 Ian Jacobs (March-BMW 742); 6 Peter Shaw (Brabham-BDA BT35). **CW** Tilley; Murray. **FL** Giles 1m12.681s (96.94mph).

'70S ROAD SPORTS (11 LAPS) 1 Charles Barter (Datsun 240Z) 15m21.996s (78.81mph); 2 Alan Harper (Lotus Elan S4) 15m43.721s; 3 Julian Barter (TVR 3000M); 4 Richard Thorne (Morgan +8). **CW** Harper; Thorne; Jai Sharma (Lancia Fulvia); Bob Trotter (Ford Escort RS2000). **FL** C Barter 1m27.042s (80.95mph).

VREDESTEIN JAGUAR XK5 & '70S ROAD SPORTS CLASS D2 (10 LAPS) 1 Graeme Dodd (XK120) 15m26.762s (75.91s); 2 Nigel Webb (XK120) 15m43.132s; 3 Rob Newall (XK120); 4 David Hall (XK120). **CW** Newall; Brian Arculus (XK120); Mark Oldfield (Alfa Romeo Alfaletta GTV). **FL** Dodd 1m30.109s (78.19mph).

HSCC HISTORIC ROAD SPORTS (11 LAPS) 1 Laurence Bailey (TVR Griffith) 16m31.674s (78.04mph); 2 Webb 16m42.927s; 3 Justin Murphy (Milano GT); 4 Andy Shepherd (Lotus 7 S2). **CW** Webb; Murphy; Shepherd; Robert Barrie (Porsche 911); James Bilderbeck (Turner-Climax Mk2); Tim Burrett (Lancia Aurelia B20). **FL** Mike Eagles (Milano GT) 1m27.284s (80.72mph).

HSCC MILLERS OILS CLASSIC SPORTS (9 LAPS) 1 David Clark (Elva-BMW Mk8) 12m52.159s (81.98mph); 2 Jamie Boot (TVR Griffith) 12m55.252s; 3 Allen Tice (Marcos GT); 4 Barry Sewell (Marcos GT). **CW** Boot; Tice; Stuart Tizzard (Lotus Elan); Les Ely (Jaguar E); Simon Ashworth (MGB); Malcolm Sanders (Lotus Elan S3); Steve Hill (Lotus Elite); Tony Bailey (Osca MT4). **FL** Clark 1m24.065s (83.81mph).

HSCC CLASSIC RACING CARS (11 LAPS) 1 Matthew Watts (Brabham BT16) 15m17.266s (84.37mph); 2 Michael Schryver (Lotus 22) 15m29.711s; 3 Ian Gray (Brabham BT30); 4 Roger Bevan (Brabham BT21A). **CW** Schryver; Gray; Greg Thornton (Titan Mk4); Brian Ashby (Emeryson F1); David Pullen (Chevron B17); Derek Walker (Terrier Mk4). **FL** Watts 1m21.565s (86.38mph).

HSCC/HRSR HISTORIC SALOONS (11 LAPS) 1 Dan Cox (Ford Anglia 105E) 16m28.225s; 2 Graeme Dodd (Jaguar Mk2) 16m36.369s; 3 James Dodd (Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint GT); 4 Neil Wood (Ford Anglia 105E). **CW** Dodd; Dodd; Roger Godfrey (Austin Cooper S); Alan Kitson (Singer Chamois); Richard Lawson (Ford Lotus Cortina Mk1). **FL** Cox 1m27.425s (80.59mph).



Laurence Bailey's TVR won the Historic Road Sports encounter with ease

MICK WALKER



Martyn Donn (8) and Patrick Sherrington lucked in when Mike Jenvey retired from Snetterton's second FVee race

SNETTERTON 750 MOTOR CLUB

March 28

JENVEY GLOWS, THEN BLOWS

AFTER a long winter break, Snetterton's car-racing season got underway with a packed programme of races from the 750 Motor Club.

Mike Jenvey enjoyed mixed fortunes as he launched his Formula Vee title defence with a win and a non-finish. Brake problems in practice left him the mountainous task of battling

through the qualifying heats. Both times Jenvey sliced through the field to claim dominant wins, but they were only enough to put him 16th on the grid for the finals. Nevertheless, such was his momentum that he took just four laps to grab the lead from Martyn Donn in Sunday's final. Donn briefly fought back, before a determined Jenvey slipstreamed to victory on the final blast down Revett straight.

Monday's final promised more of the same but, sadly for Jenvey, four races in two days took their toll and battery failure ended his race. Jenvey's demise was good news for Donn and Patrick

Sherrington, who edged away from the field before Donn grabbed a lasting lead at the Esses on the last lap.

A bumper field of Stock Hatches enjoyed two tight heats and a final on both days. Robert Foreman outfoxed Gordon MacMillan to win the first of Sunday's heats, while Simon Hunt comfortably took heat two. In a terrific final, Darren Blumson survived the race-long attentions of Maurice Hayden to take the spoils. Gareth Wright had looked set to overhaul the leaders with a late charge, until a broken driveshaft shattered his hopes.

With Wright retiring within yards of the start of Monday's final,

Blumson and Hayden again dominated. Blumson eventually secured the laurels after Hayden's last lap lunge at the Esses threw him onto the mud. John Hemming had dominated the first of the earlier heats, while Robert Foreman held off Chris Petto to win the other.

Peter Ratcliff won the opening Caterham Seven race, spoiling Keith Dunn's fine recovery by out-braking him into the Esses on the final lap. It had been a gutsy fight-back by pole-sitter Dunn, who clawed his way into the lead after an early spin, only to succumb to Ratcliff's late challenge. The tables were turned in race two, as Ratcliff put in a terrific comeback after an

opening-lap spin. This time Dunn held his nerve for a deserved win.

The weather conspired to dampen the Formula 4 action. Pace-setters Barry Pritchard and Adrian Kidd played it safe on wets in the greasy conditions of race one. But as the track dried, Peter Denham's slick-shod Vauxhall Lotus swept victoriously past. Early drizzle also made conditions treacherous for race two. Kidd drove superbly on dry tyres to score a crushing win.

Craig Dawson scored a remarkable brace in Hot Hatch. In the first, he eased away after Simon Harvey's first-lap challenge ended in a spin. Harvey made amends in race two, making the early running as Dawson spun. Despite losing fifth gear, Dawson stormed back to deny Harvey with a brilliant last-corner move.

A delighted Keith Ahlers scored a magnificent victory in the opening Roadsports race, somehow defying Mike Gardiner's potent Noble. The scale of Ahlers' achievement was underlined as Gardiner left him standing in race two, smashing the lap record on his way to a peerless win.

Once Anthony Raine's spirited challenge ended with a spin at the Esses, multiple champion Mick Harris eased away for a convincing 750 Formula win.

Eamon Matheson twice got the better of Ake Bornebusch to claim double victory in the fledgling Bike-Engined Series.

by Oliver Timson

Blumson's 106 and Haydon's Saxo kept the crowd rivetted





RICHARD STYLES

FORMULA VEE (11 LAPS) 1 Mike Jenvey 15m01.89s (85.71mph); 2 Martyn Donn (Scarab) 15m02.19s; 3 Ken Elliott (Leestone Bowles); 4 Sam Buxton (GAC01/Daghorn); 5 Paul Smith (GAC02); 6 Ian Oliveira (GAC01). **Fastest Lap** Donn 1m19.80s (88.06mph). **RACE TWO (11 LAPS)** 1 Donn 14m45.42s (87.30mph); 2 Patrick Sherrington (Scarab Mk II/V) 14m45.60s; 3 Elliott; 4 John Hughes (Leestone AHS); 5 Simon Robinson (Sheane Daghorn); 6 Steve Ough (AHS Challenger). **FL** Sherrington 1m19.22s (88.70mph). **HEAT ONE (10 LAPS)** 1 Jenvey (Sheane) 16m00.26s (73.18mph); 2 Warren Smith (Sheane) 16m01.05s; 3 Daniel Hands (Leestone AHS); 4 Graham Kiddy (Sheane); 5 Ian Jordan (Royale RP26); 6 Paul Moden (Sheane). **FL** Jenvey 1m32.59s (75.90mph). **HEAT TWO (11 LAPS)** 1 Jenvey 15m25.63s (83.51mph); 2 Smith 15m33.32s; 3 Bob Higgins (Sheane 98); 4 Hands; 5 Moden; 6 Nick Brown (GAC01). **FL** Jenvey 1m21.44s (86.29mph).

DEMON TWEES / YOKOHAMA STOCK HATCH (10 LAPS) 1 Darren Blumson (Peugeot 106 Rallye) 15m15.64s (76.75mph); 2 Maurice Hayden (Citroen Saxo VTR) 15m16.99s; 3 Steve Drewery (Suzuki Swift GTi); 4 Pat Grove (Peugeot 106 Rallye). **CW** Drewery. **FL** Gareth Wright (Peugeot 106 XS) 1m29.30s (78.69mph). **RACE TWO (10 LAPS)** 1 Blumson 15m01.09s (77.99mph); 2 Drewery 15m02.35s; 3 Hayden; 4 Pete Morgan (Citroen Saxo). **CW** Drewery. **FL** Petto 1m28.78s (79.15mph). **HEAT ONE (10 LAPS)** 1 Robert Foreman (Citroen Saxo VTR) 15m21.40s (76.27mph); 2 Gordon MacMillan (Peugeot 205 GTi) 15m21.86s; 3 Paul Wilson (Peugeot 205 GTi);

4 Hilary Howlett (Citroen Saxo VTR). **CW** MacMillan. **FL** Foreman 1m29.79s (78.26mph). **HEAT TWO (9 LAPS)** 1 Simon Hunt (Peugeot 106 XS) 15m28.18s (68.14mph); 2 Jeff Humphries (Fiesta XR2i) 15m29.97s; 3 David Lewis (Fiesta XR2i); 4 Simon Howard (Fiesta XR2i). **CW** Humphries. **FL** Keith Smith (VW Golf GTi) 1m38.78s (71.14mph). **HEAT THREE (5 LAPS)** 1 John Hemming (Vauxhall Nova GSi) 8m05.73s (72.34mph); 2 Humphries 8m08.23s; 3 William Hornsey (Peugeot 106 Rallye); 4 Howlett. **CW** Howlett. **FL** Hemming 1m34.38s (74.46mph). **HEAT FOUR (10 LAPS)** 1 Foreman 15m29.11s (75.63mph); 2 Christopher Petto (Suzuki Swift GTi) 15m29.43s; 3 Howard; 4 Chris Cody (Citroen Saxo). **CW** Petto. **FL** Foreman 1m30.69s (77.49mph).

CATERHAM 7s (21 LAPS) 1 Peter Ratcliff (7) 29m29.63s (83.39mph); 2 David Litchfield (Superlight) 29m32.02s; 3 Keith Dunn (Superlight); 4 Kevin Williams (R400). **CW** Neil Hinson (R400). **FL** Chris Milner (R400) 1m19.63s (88.25mph). **RACE TWO (23 LAPS)** 1 Dunn 29m48.10s (90.39mph); 2 Ratcliff 29m48.35s; 3 Litchfield; 4 Simon Fairman (Superlight). **CW** Hinson. **FL** Ratcliff 1m15.59mph (92.96mph) record. **FORMULA 4 (15 LAPS)** 1 Peter Denham (Vauxhall Lotus) 20m03.75s (87.57mph); 2 Barry Pritchard (Van Diemen RF01/4) 20m09.01s; 3 Adrian Kidd (Van Diemen RF03/04); 4 Steve Patania (Van Diemen Comtec). **CW** Pritchard; Peter Allen (Van Diemen RF002); Richard Hypher (Van Diemen); Robert Kisby (Van Diemen RF93); Paul Rider (Royale RP30). **FL** Denham 1m16.53s (91.82mph).

RACE TWO (14 LAPS) 1 Kidd 20m23.25s (80.43mph); 2 Pritchard 20m30.13s; 3 Patania; 4 Denham. **CW** Denham; Malcolm Scott (Van Diemen RF2000); Hypher. **FL** Pritchard 1m15.81s (92.69mph).

ROADSPORTS (11 LAPS) 1 Keith Ahlers (Morgan +8) 14m23.55s (89.51mph); 2 Mike Gardiner (Noble) 14m24.74s; 3 Mal Davison (Porsche 993); 4 Doug Ellwood (TVR Tuscan). **CW** David Dawson (Evante 140TC); Pete Richards (Clan Crusader). **FL** Gardiner 1m16.97s (91.30mph). **RACE TWO (11 LAPS)** 1 Gardiner 14m12.37s (90.69mph); 2 Ahlers 14m24.30s; 3 Davison; 4 Ellwood. **CW** Ed Morris (Ginetta G20); Richards. **FL** Gardiner 1m14.91s (93.81mph) record.

DEMON TWEES / YOKOHAMA HOT HATCH (10 LAPS) 1 Craig Dawson (Astra Si) 15m15.59s (76.75mph); 2 Dave Baseley (Vauxhall Nova) 15m39.23s; 3 Mike Webb (Ford Focus); 4 Simon Harvey (Peugeot 306 GTi). **CW** Baseley. **FL** Harvey 1m28.01s (79.85mph). **RACE TWO (11 LAPS)** 1 Dawson 15m33.17s (82.84mph); 2 Harvey 15m33.47s; 3 Webb; 4 Horner. **CW** Horner. **FL** Dawson 1m22.21s (85.48mph).

750 FORMULA (8 LAPS) 1 Mick Harris (Dart 877) 11m30.05s (81.47mph); 2 Peter Bove (ADR 750) 11m33.49s; 3 Bob Simpson (SS Fiat); 4 Anthony Raine (Centaur Mk16). **CW** Ian Allen (Marrow). **FL** Simpson 1m23.88 (83.78mph).

BIKESPORTS (15 LAPS) 1 Eamon Matheson (TS Mission) 19m30.95s (90.02mph); 2 Ake Bornebusch (Global Light GT) 19m31.91s; 3 Simon Ford (Radical Clubsport); 4 Peter Hurst (Fisher Fury). **CW** Bornebusch; Ford; Hurst; Oliver Hulme (Sylvia Phenix). **FL** Bornebusch 1m16.51s (91.85mph). **RACE TWO (15 LAPS)** 1 Matheson 19m15.48s (91.22mph); 2 Bornebusch 19m17.07s; 3 Ford; 4 Hurst. **CW** Bornebusch; Ford; Hurst; Hulme. **FL** Bornebusch 1m15.50s (93.08mph) establishes record.

JEC SALOONS (10 LAPS) 1 Simon Lewis (Xj6) 15m16.88s (76.64mph); 2 James Shea (Xj6) 15m17.65s; 3 Zoe North (XjC). **CW** Chris Palmer (Xj6 X300); Simon Houllingsworth (Mk1); Richard Dorlin (Xj6). **FL** Shea 1m30.13s (77.97mph). **RACE TWO (10 LAPS)** 1 Shea 15m07.63s (77.42mph); 2 Lewis 15m08.39s; 3 North; 4 Taylor. **CW** Trevor Baines (XType); Houllingsworth; Dorlin. **FL** Lewis 1m29.10s (78.87mph).



Twist just held off his charging team-mate for his first Fiat win

MALLORY PARK BRSCC Twist turns on the style

JUBILANT Steve Twist scored his maiden Fiat Racing Challenge victory at Mallory Park's Easter Monday meeting, holding off an inspired charge from last place on the grid by his AMR team-mate and former series champion Martin Riman.

Twist's pole-sitting Uno led from lights to flag but Riman, whose newly-built Uno suffered a fuel pump failure in qualifying, reduced the deficit to 0.38sec at the finish.

Riman beat his brother Mark's four-year-old lap record by more than a second during his remarkable surge through the field, snatching second place from defending champion Jason Greatrex through Devil's Elbow at the end of lap 11.

With three laps to go Twist's lead was 2.2sec, but backmarkers came into play on the final tour, Riman homed in on the leader, but crucially Twist emerged from Shaw's Hairpin still in front and held his narrow advantage to the line.

Gavin Wills maintained his unbeaten start to the defence of his Star of the Midlands FF1600 title with a brace of dominant victories in his Van Diemen RF00. Reynard driver Stuart Kestenbaum was runner-up on both occasions, with Paul Mason's Swift pipping Oliver Radford's Van Diemen RF90 for the final podium place in the first race thanks to a neat manoeuvre at Gerard's with six laps remaining in the race.

Not to be outdone, Radford beat Mason to third place in race two, claiming his first-ever podium position with a late-braking move past John Miller's Swift going into Lake Esses. Mason snatched fourth place from Miller with just over a lap to go, swooping round the outside at the same corner sequence. Justin Dawkins, a regular series front-runner, retired from both races due to a misfire on his new Ray GS05.

Torsten Skeen was declared the winner of the Ford Fiesta race, cut short by a crash involving Zetec class rivals Marc Jones and Matthew England.

Skeen and pole-sitter Andy Neate ran door to door for most of the opening lap until Skeen edged ahead at Devil's Elbow, grabbing the crucial inside line for the following Gerard's bend.

Skeen stayed just out of Neate's reach thereafter, with Brian Roper finishing third ahead of a ding-dong duel between David Abbott and Roger Mahoney. Lee Mabbett clinched the Zetec class spoils after finally breaching Daniel Rose's defences on Stebbe Straight on lap 11.

Mark Robinson won the XR Challenge event from pole position from fellow XR2 drivers Graham Field and Justin Roberts. A race-stopping shunt at Shaw's eliminated reigning champion Mike Wright, whose XR3i had headed both Field and Roberts earlier on.

A lively Ford Saloons encounter was red-flagged when Stephen Scott's leading Escort Cosworth caught fire at Shaw's on lap five. By then, the similar car of Bob Ross, who started third, had already started smoking, leaving poleman Malcolm Wise to take the re-start with his main rivals absent or otherwise out of the reckoning. Wise's Escort Cosworth duly powered to victory over Brian O'Connor, with the tenacious Tim Watson rising to third in his relatively lightweight XR2.

The corresponding race for the slower Classes C-E was a walk in the park for Craig Owen's Sierra RS Cosworth, which finished 10sec clear of Nigel England's Fiesta. Chris Lester was the only other driver to remain unlapped by the leader.

Steve Cheetham coolly won both legs of the Porsche 924 double-header, beating 2002 champion Ryan Hooker into second on each occasion.

by Tim Baggs

FIAT RACING CHALLENGE (21 LAPS) 1 Steve Twist (Uno) 20m18.071s (83.78mph); 2 Martin Riman (Uno) 20m18.452s; 3 Jason Greatrex (Uno); 4 Mark Riman (Uno); 5 Adrian Miller (Uno); 6 Steve Townsend (Uno). **FL** Martin Riman 56.968s (85.31mph) record.

STAR OF THE MIDLANDS FF1600 (25 LAPS) 1 Gavin Wills (Van Diemen RF00) 20m29.443s (98.82mph); 2 Stuart Kestenbaum (Reynard 89FF) 20m57.269s; 3 Paul Mason (Swift SC94); 4 Oliver Radford (Van Diemen RF90). **CW** Kestenbaum; Mason. **FL** Wills 48.649s (99.89mph). **RACE TWO (25 LAPS)** 1 Wills 20m29.712s (98.80mph); 2 Kestenbaum 20m51.316s; 3 Radford; 4 Mason. **CW** Kestenbaum; Radford. **FL** Wills 48.709s (99.77mph).

FORD FIESTAS (13 LAPS) 1 Torsten Skeen (Si) 12m03.821s (87.28mph); 2 Andy Neate (Si) 12m05.132s; 3 Brian Roper (Si); 4 David Abbott (Si). **Class winner** Lee Mabbett (Zetec). **Fastest lap** Skeen 54.779s (88.72mph) record.

FORD XR CHALLENGE (19 LAPS) 1 Mark Robinson (XR2) 18m15.717s (84.27mph); 2 Graham Field (XR2) 18m22.283s; 3 Justin Roberts (XR2); 4 Chris Jones (XR3i). **CW** Jones. **FL** Robinson 56.506s (86.00mph).

FORD SALOONS, CLASSES A&B (12 LAPS) 1 Malcolm Wise (Escort Cosworth) 10m30.510s (92.49mph); 2 Brian O'Connor (Escort Cosworth) 10m33.862s; 3 Tim Watson (Fiesta XR2); 4 Brian Long (Sierra XR4i). **CW** Watson. **FL** O'Connor 51.423s (94.51mph). **CLASSES C-E (22 LAPS)** 1 Craig Owen (Sierra RS Cosworth) 20m28.776s (87.01mph); 2 Nigel England (Fiesta) 20m39.239s; 3 Chris Lester (Fiesta); 4 Barry Obey (Fiesta). **CW** England; James Horner (XR2i). **FL** Owen 54.404s (89.33mph).

LODGE SPORTS PORSCHE 924s (18 LAPS) 1 Steve Cheetham 17m19.870s (84.12mph); 2 Ryan Hooker 17m23.464s; 3 Phil Hattwell; 4 Richard Mowbray; 5 Paul Bainbridge; 6 Martin Todd. **FL** Cheetham 56.729s (85.67mph) record. **RACE TWO (16 LAPS)** 1 Cheetham 15m24.572s (84.10mph); 2 Hooker 15m26.954s; 3 Hattwell; 4 Bainbridge; 5 Todd; 6 Carl Powell. **FL** Cheetham 56.784s (85.58mph).



RICHARD STYLES

Eamon Matheson won the Bikesports encounter



MICK WALKER

Gavin Wills cleared off at the front of the Formula Ford events

CASTLE COMBE
BRSCC

March 28

VOYAZIDES BRINGS
IT HOME WITH BACON

ANDY BACON'S solid opening stint set up Leo Voyazides to win a tremendous Top Hat

Pre-'66 European Touring Car Challenge in his Ford Falcon, as historic endurance racing opened Castle Combe's season in style.

A fabulous array of V8 Americana made for a thunderous stampede to Quarry, with Nick Whale (starting Richard Shaw's BMW 1800Ti) splitting David Clark (in Richard Oldworth's Falcon) from Jackie Oliver (soon to lead in Shaun Lynn's Galaxie), Bacon and John Young's Dodge Dart.

Front-row starter Paul Ingram was slow away, but hurled Chris Chiles's Mustang back to lead in 15 laps, when Bacon pitted. Oliver was already out at Quarry after some robust driving, and Young took up the chase.

Oldworth got ahead of Voyazides at the stops, and they were nose-to-tail with 20 minutes remaining, when Oldworth's engine blew. Chiles, clutchless, could do nothing about Voyazides, but Shaw three-wheeled the BMW back to within 4.3s of the Greek after an hour.

Chiles and the Lotus Cortinas of Les Goble and Michael Steele/Julian Bronson were on the same lap as the winner, but the Dart faded to sixth with Grahame Bryant up.

Clark and Oldworth won a fraught Cloth Cap sportscar enduro in the former's Elva Mk8. Steve Farthing recovered from an early spin to repass Lynn's wonderful Ford GT40, then spun Chris Jolly's Lotus 23 again amid traffic at the Esses.

Lynn went ahead briefly when Clark was squeezed into the corner markers at Bobbies during lappery and resumed fourth. When Lynn relayed 1969 Le Mans winner Oliver, Farthing took a turn in front until he went off for good at Tower.

Clark swept through, and handed Oldworth a good lead over the Bryant family's AC Cobra.

Young Oliver nibbled away at his advantage for a while, then settled for an honourable second on an oily track. Allen Tice's Marcos was a



David Clark leads the way at the start of the Top Hat pre-'66 race

OLIVER READ

splendid third, ahead of Oliver, whom Irish stalwart George Douglas had the pleasure of unlapping himself from after a long stop in his Ginetta G12.

Dave Thomas and his trusty Ford Capri won the inaugural Top Hat Groovy Baby race for Souful '70s Saloons after early leader Simon Arber went ploughing at Tower in his Alfa Romeo. The BMW 2002s of Richard Tyzack and Simon Diffey didn't last, allowing former FF2000 and Toyota F3 racer Chris Fearon to bring his Vauxhall Firenza through strongly for third.

The sleek Lotus Elite of Adam Crowton was never headed in the Oldies But Goldies event, although Jim Prentice and Roy Chamberlain tried immensely hard to oust him in Volvo Amazon and TR2 respectively, and Ivan Dutton was in the mix in the extraordinary Alvis Grey Lady. Chamberlain kept second, despite a late spin.

Four-wheel-drive ruled the roost in the Combe Saloon event, in which sprinter Keith Murray won his first motor race in his Dialynx-built Audi A4 Quattro. After a messy start, he unleashed the 350bhp beast and shook off Steve Turvey's Subaru Impreza.

The BMW M3s of Crispin Thomas and Ian Craig gave vain chase, but Nick Williamson picked them both off before his Peugeot 205 expired. Poleman Robert Ballard's ex-Keith McAskill Astra went bang soon afterwards, leaving Craig and Tony Dolley to displace Thomas. A last-lap excursion by Turvey left Murray 10 second clear at the flag.

King of Combe Ed Moore won both FF1600 legs in his Van Diemen RF01, the poleman

coming from behind each time to demote Paul Barnes's Swift SC92. Young Ben Norton, flying in his older FB89, was right with them in race one.

Poleman Pat Blakeney had a torrid time, being sandwiched by Barnes and Tim Reynolds and fired into the infield as they crested Avon rise three abreast on the opener's first lap. He resumed, only to tangle with Andy Jones's new Spirit, which tore a rear corner from his Vector.

Great team work helped Blakeney get back out for the finale, in which he jostled from row 13 to finish sixth, aided by the train of cars stacked behind Barnes. Returnee Hugh Robertson (SC92), Norton and Nick Jones (RF01) were always in the chase with Brian Soule (RF00) in on the act too. Reynolds fell back after another skirmish, having set fastest lap.

Louis Davidson's Radical was left floundering on pole at the lights, but the Special GT champion quickly hacked his way back to the front, deposing Nigel Mustill's muscular Nissan Skyline and Norman Lackford's Saxon.

Dan Compton couldn't quite live with Davidson in his Radical, but eagerly eroded a three-second lead when Louis became locked amid backmarkers at Bobbies, and pressured him to the end.

by Marcus Pye

COYSTOP HAT PRE-'66 EUROPEAN TOURING CAR CHALLENGE (1 HOUR) 1

Andy Bacon/Leo Voyazides (Ford Falcon) 41 laps in 1h00m01.428s (75.82mph); 2 Nick Whale/Richard Shaw (BMW 1800Ti) 1h00m05.782s; 3 Paul Ingram/Chris Chiles (Ford Mustang) 41; 4 Les Goble (Ford Cortina Lotus) 41; 5 Michael Steele/Julian Bronson (Ford Cortina Lotus) 41; 6 John Young/Grahame Bryant (Dodge Dart) 40. **Class Winners** Whale/Shaw; Goble; Peter Baldwin/Graham Churchill (Austin Cooper S); Steve Gray/Tony Jardine (Hillman Imp). **Fastest lap** Ingram 1m23.622s (79.64mph).

COYS CLOTH CAP PRE-'66 SPORTSCAR CHALLENGE (1 HOUR) 1

David Clark/Richard Oldworth (Elva-BMW Mk8) 44 laps in 1h00m16.423s (81.03mph); 2 Grahame & Oliver Bryant (AC Cobra) 1h01m08.218s; 3 Allen Tice (Marcos GT); 4 Shaun Lynn/Jackie Oliver (Ford GT40); 5 George Douglas (Ginetta-Lotus G12); 6 Tim Fish (TVR Griffith). **CW** Bryant/Bryant; Tice; Douglas; Lynn/Oliver; Chris Sharpe/Neville Priest (Elva-Lotus t/c Mk7); Spadge Hopkins/Chris Blewett (Ginetta G4). **FL** Lynn 1m17.597s (85.82mph).

COYS GROOVY BABY CHALLENGE (30 MINS) 1

David Thomas (Ford Capri) 22 laps in 31m16.323s (78.08mph); 2 Simon Arber (Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint GT) 31m30.127s; 3 Chris Fearon (Vauxhall

Keith Murray won his first race in his 350bhp Audi A4 Quattro



OLIVER READ

Graduate racer Gary Kennedy nips inside Martin Oxborough



THRUXTON BARC

March 28

KENNEDY LEAVES IT TO THE LAST CORNER

LAP RECORDS were rewritten wholesale at Thruxton, where three Caterham Graduate races produced a combined winning margin of less than one second! Best win of the lot was Gary Kennedy's in the opener, as he could hardly have left it later – he only hit the front on the very last corner.

The wide open spaces of the ultra-fast Hampshire circuit are ideal for equally-matched machinery and it turned into a real cat-and-mouse thriller, with place changes galore.

"That was a real slipstreamer of a race," exclaimed first-race winner Kennedy, who'd only been seventh quickest in qualifying.

If the victor's progress was well timed, then consider Martin Oxborough's yo-yo up and down the lap chart. He led, slipped to seventh and then led again a lap later – it was that kind of race. He eventually finished second, beaten by just 0.132s. David Hewitt completed the podium visitors. Just more than one second blanketed the top five.

The lap record didn't go in that one, but it did in the Super Graduate class race, where Toby Briant lopped a whopping three seconds off the benchmark en route to third place. He led at one stage, but it was long-time front man Rory Young who timed things just right, coming back to oust first-placed Jamie Ellwood on the penultimate lap. Again, a second covered the top five.

Then it was the turn of the Mega Graduates to rewrite the record book, with sixth-place finisher and last-lap spinner Tim Jump lowering the standard by more than two seconds.

Red flags flew for an opening-lap incident at the complex, before the shortened re-run produced

another dose of wheel-to-wheel racing.

Mike Welburn led early on, but was dumped to sixth by mid-distance as Matthew Burrows and co upped the ante. A ballsy move by Christopher Batten took him to the front on lap nine, but Burrows redressed the situation two laps later and held on to win by just over half a second. George Longmuir completed the top three.

The first of the MGOC races fell to sometime champion Gary Smith, who debuted a newly-built MGF to replace a previous long-suffering example which had endured a hard life before he acquired it. Smith moved ahead at half-distance to deny polesitter and erstwhile leader Stuart Plotnek.

Not surprisingly, MGFs filled the top 10 places, with Jim Baynam celebrating his 25th year of competition in the same hard-working MGB, coming out best of the Class B runners in 11th spot.

Paul Naish 'won' the later race, on his debut in a ZR, but the victory didn't stand for very long as a yellow flag infringement cost him a one-second penalty, handing race honours to fellow ZR driver Robb Addison.

Fellow ZR graduate David Mellor had earlier traded the lead with Addison until he plunged off the circuit at the complex on lap five. Mellor's demise was the signal (as if he needed it) for Naish to apply the pressure on Addison, but his 'winning' pass on lap nine was his undoing. Addison was four seconds under the lap record.

Such was their pace, the front two left Adrian Olsson some 26s adrift. Putting a quite disastrous 2004 campaign behind him, Andy Campbell was best of the Maestros in fourth spot.

David Howard toyed with the opposition in the Post Historic race, the Newbury man stretching the long legs of his Jaguar XJ12 on the straight bits to keep Nick Dann and Stephen Primett at arm's length.

Stacy Vickers recorded a remarkable victory in the Group



Stacy Vickers went from 30th to first in the Gp1 Touring Cars

One race, his Mazda RX7 starting last on a 30-car grid after breaking its differential on the opening lap of qualifying.

Vickers was sixth after one lap, second after another circuit and in front on lap three.

Chris Bright, Jim McLoughlin and early race leader Adrian Fuller were overshadowed as they chased the red car in vain.

Hardly surprisingly, Nigel Garrett crushed the Classic Thunder opposition in his now fuel-injected Rover SD1. Jody Halse, in his considerably less powerful BMW 325, was next best, just ahead of the screaming Mk 1 Ford Escort of Steve Dillon.

The Classic & Historic Saloon Cars were combined with the ModProd Saloons to form the curtain-closer.

Neil Philpotts took the spoils in his Mitsubishi Starion, working hard to keep Gareth Porter's well-

driven Peugeot 205 at bay. Marc Taylor ensured a Starion 1-3, while David Hall's Lotus Cortina was comfortably best of the older machinery.

by Dud Candler

BOOKATRACK.COM CATERHAM GRADUATES (12 LAPS) 1 Gary Kennedy 19m58.537s (84.92mph); 2 Martin Oxborough 19m58.669s; 3 David Hewitt; 4 Mark Parsonage; 5 Robert Herring; 6 Charlie Watt. **Fastest lap** Andrew Smith 1m36.725s (87.68mph).

BOOKATRACK.COM CATERHAM SUPER GRADUATES (13 LAPS) 1 Rory Young 20m00.337s (91.85mph); 2 Jamie Ellwood 20m00.590s; 3 Toby Briant; 4 Paul Manyweather; 5 Chalie Hunt; 6 Sean Southwood. **FL** Briant 1m29.879s (94.36mph) record.

BOOKATRACK.COM CATERHAM MEGA GRADUATES (12 LAPS) 1 Matthew Burrows 17m59.802s (94.25mph); 2 Christopher Batten 18m00.353s; 3 George Longmuir; 4 Christian Marryat; 5 Mike Welburn; 6 Tim Jump. **FL** Jump 1m27.945s (96.44mph) record.

LANCASTER INSURANCE MGOC, CLASSES A/F (10 LAPS) 1 Gary Smith (F) 16m07.649s (87.65mph); 2 Stuart Plotnek (F) 16m08.331s; 3 Paul Naish (F); 4 Martin Wills (F). **CW** Jim Baynam (B). **FL** Naish 1m34.733s (89.53mph) record.

LANCASTER INSURANCE MGOC, CLASSES B/Z (10 LAPS) 1 Robb Addison (ZR) 15m48.114s (89.45mph); 2 Naish (ZR) 15m48.881s (inc 1s pen); 3 Adrian Olsson (ZR); 4 Andy Campbell (Maestro). **CW** Campbell. **FL** Addison 1m33.017s (91.18mph) record.

IBIS PACKAGING SOLUTIONS GROUP ONE TOURING CARS (8 LAPS) 1 Stacy Vickers (Mazda RX7) 12m50.127s (88.10mph); 2 Chris Bright (Rover SD1) 12m52.860s; 3 Jim McLoughlin (Ford Capri); 4 Adrian Fuller (Ford Capri). **CW** Bright; Andy Hayne (VW Golf GTI); Brian Goodwin (Renault 5TS). **FL** Vickers 1m33.894s (90.33mph).

YORK FITNESS POST-HISTORIC TOURING CARS (10 LAPS) 1 David Howard (Jaguar XJ12) 16m09.997s (87.43mph); 2 Nick Dann (Ford Capri) 16m10.574s; 3 Stephen Primett (Ford Escort); 4 Neil Barr (Ford Capri). **CW** Dann; Primett; Steven Young (Mini Clubman); Peter St Barbe (Lotus Cortina). **FL** Tony Cradlington (Triumph Dolomite Sprint) 1m35.234s (89.06mph).

WAXOYL CLASSIC THUNDER (10 LAPS) 1 Nigel Garrett (Rover SD1) 14m53.789s (94.89mph); 2 Jody Halse (BMW 325) 15m08.357s; 3 Steve Dillon (Ford Escort); 4 Norman Rickett (BMW 1602). **CW** Halse; Howard; Peter Nixon (VW Golf GTI). **FL** Garrett 1m27.147s (97.32mph).

TOYOTYRES MODPROD SALOONS & BARC/CTCR CLASSIC SALOONS & HISTORIC TOURING CARS (10 LAPS) 1 Neil Philpotts (Mitsubishi Starion) 15m23.772s (91.81mph); 2 Gareth Porter (Peugeot 205GTI) 15m25.006s; 3 Marc Taylor (Mitsubishi Starion); 4 Tim Saunders (Honda Integra Type R). **CW** Porter; Dennis Bassom (Toyota Corolla GT); Graeme Roberts (Ford Escort); David Hall (Lotus Cortina); Thomas Lailey De Ville (Ford Anglia); Andy Messham (Austin Mini).

Firenza); 4 Peter Mallett (Ford Capri). **CW** Arber; Fearon; Simon Park (Lancia Fulvia HF); Chris Whelan (AR Giulia Super Ti); Steve Rogers (AR Giulia GTA Junior); **FL** Thomas 1m23.731s (79.54mph).

COYS OLDIES BUT GOLDIES PRE-'60 (30 MINS) 1 Adam Crowton (Lotus Elite) 20 laps in 30m14.077s (73.42mph); 2 Roy Chamberlain (Triumph TR2) 30m30.139s; 3 Jim Prentice (Volvo Amazon); 4 Ivan Dutton (Alvis Grey Lady). **CW** Chamberlain; Dutton; William Lynch (Austin A30); Martin Elson (Austin A40). **FL** Crowton 1m27.565s (76.05mph).

NATIONAL MOBILE WINDSCREENS CASTLE COMBE SALOONS (10 LAPS) 1 Keith Murray (Audi A4 Quattro) 13m33.525s (81.86mph); 2 Steve Turvey (Subaru Impreza) 13m43.910s; 3 Ian Craig (BMW M3); 4 Tony Dolley (Peugeot 206 GTI). **CW** Tony MacWhirter (Vauxhall Corsa); Russell Poynter-Brown (Vauxhall Corsa). **FL** Murray 1m19.511s (83.76mph).

MELTON CONCRETE PRODUCTS CASTLE COMBE FF1600 (8 LAPS) 1 Ed Moore (Van Diemen RF01) 9m57.357s (89.19mph); 2 Paul Barnes (Swift SC92) 9m59.081s; 3 Ben Norton (Swift FB89); 4 Hugh Robertson (Swift SC92). **CW** Barnes; Norton. **FL** Barnes 1m13.096s (91.11mph). **RACE2 (10 LAPS)** 1 Moore 12m31.965s (88.56mph); 2 Barnes 12m33.650s; 3 Nick Jones (Van Diemen RF01); 4 Robertson. **CW** Barnes; Norton. **FL** Tim Reynolds (Swift SC92) 1m12.976s (91.26mph).

CASTLE COMBE SPECIAL GT (12 LAPS) 1 Louis Davidson (Radical Proport-Suzuki) 14m09.390s (94.09mph); 2 Dan Compton (Radical Proport-Suzuki) 14m10.065s; 3 Norman Lackford (Saxon SRC-BDA); 4 David Smith (Mallock-Vauxhall Mk34). **CW** Lackford; Keith Sprules (Ferrari 355). **FL** Davidson 1m07.699s (98.37mph).



Rory Young, Jamie Ellwood and Toby Briant thrash out the Caterham Super Graduate spoils

OULTON PARK
BRSCC

March 28

ON-FORM LUFFARELLI
CLAIMS DOUBLE WIN

FABIO LUFFARELLI'S

VW Corrado was a double winner in the VSR/Silhouette & Super Silhouettes at Oulton on Monday. The eventual winner ran side by side with the Corrado of Mark Jones early in the first race, but when his rival retired the lead was made safe. Keith White and Shane Brereton soon went clear in second and third, with Brereton stealing second exiting Lodge on lap seven. Ian Fewings took third when White slowed on the last lap.

White led the opening lap in race two, with Luffarelli taking Brereton for second around the outside of Old Hall on the second tour. White held off the first-race winner for a couple of laps before losing out past the pits.

He then slowed again, allowing Brereton and Jones to sweep past.

Chris Chisnall fought off his rivals to take his Van Diemen RF00 to a simple win in the opening Opal Telecom NW FF1600 Post-'86 race.

Richard Tannahill's Swift lost an early second to Mike Gardner's Van Diemen at Knickerbrook, but claimed the knicker back at Old Hall. Although the top three had made a break, race debutant Neil Boardman started to edge his Van Diemen closer to Gardner. Through Knickerbrook for the fourth time Gardner ran wide, so Boardman snatched third and Jonathan Lang latched onto Gardner too.

Tannahill closed on Chisnall towards the end as the leader picked up a misfire, but also had to keep an eye on the threatening Boardman, who came home third.

Caterham Academy Champion Guy Harrington secured a victory in his Roadsport Inter debut, in a race that was red-flagged twice. Mike Blackadder provided race-long pressure but appeared to have lost second to Neil Fletcher at Old Hall on the 10th lap. But when Mike Richards and Howard Pessall went off at Deer Leap, red flags handed second back to Blackadder.

Harrington led an early three-car break in race two, from Blackadder and Nick Potter. But Fletcher came storming through into second at Old Hall on lap five and had the lead before the end of the lap. Blackadder was forced back to fourth with Potter heading the chasers. Harrington briefly regained second on lap 11 as Fletcher's lead was eroded. But Potter attacked again and nosed into the lead at the end of lap 15. Fletcher still had enough in hand to grab the advantage back, though, while Harrington pipped Potter for second two laps from home.

Henry Fletcher had a relatively easy win in the first Caterham Roadsport B race, after Jeremy Ellis

lost it at Old Hall on the opening lap. Chris Fryar broke clear of the pack to consolidate second and Ellis's recovery netted him third.

Ellis made no repeat of his mistake in race two and slipped past Fletcher to lead out of Cascades on lap two. A terrific duel ensued before Fletcher had brake problems and had to concede.

After John Loebell's Reynard FF88 pulled off at Island on the seventh lap of the Pre-'87 NW FF1600 opener, David Franklin upped his pace to shake off the Reynard of race debutant Andrew Meyrick.

Andy Page's Giulietta had no serious challengers in the Alfa Romeo encounter, as he cruised to an easy win over Roger Evans' GTV. Anthony George battled from ninth on the first lap to take third.

■ by Peter Scherer

VSR/SILHOUETTE & SUPER SILHOUETTE (10 LAPS) 1 Fabio Luffarelli (VW Corrado) 15m38.862s (85.35mph); 2 Shane Brereton (VW Corrado) 15m50.078s; 3 Ian Fewings (Peugeot 206 GTi); 4 Keith White (VW Corrado). **Class Winner** Stephen Barnard (Pontiac Grand Prix). **Fastest Lap** Luffarelli 1m32.722s (86.42mph).

RACE TWO (10 LAPS) 1 Luffarelli 15m34.409s (85.76mph); 2 Brereton 15m44.630s; 3 Mark Jones (VW

Corrado); 4 White. **CW** Jonathan Hoggarth (Pontiac Grand Prix). **FL** Luffarelli 1m31.780s (87.31mph).

OPAL TELECOM NW FF1600 POST-'86 (13 LAPS) 1 Chris Chisnall (Van Diemen RF00) 20m15.256s (85.72mph); 2 Richard Tannahill (Swift SC94) 20m15.922s; 3 Neil Boardman (Van Diemen RF91); 4 Jonathan Lang (Van Diemen RF00). **CW** Tannahill. **FL** Lang 1m32.393s (86.73mph).

MOTORSPORT NEWS CATERHAM ROADSPORT CHALLENGE (9 LAPS) 1 Guy Harrington 15m05.835s (79.62mph); 2 Mike Blackadder 15m05.997s; 3 Neil Fletcher; 4 Nick Potter; 5 Bill Addison; 6 Stephen Rowden. **FL** Fletcher 1m39.161s (80.81mph).

RACE TWO (18 LAPS) 1 Fletcher 30m20.815s (79.22mph); 2 Harrington 30m21.100s; 3 Potter; 4 Blackadder; 5 Addison; 6 Roger Norris. **FL** Harrington 1m39.441s (80.58mph).

MOTORSPORT NEWS CATERHAM ROADSPORT CHALLENGE (12 LAPS)

1 Henry Fletcher 20m31.391s (78.09mph); 2 Chris Fryar (82.94mph); 2 Andrew Meyrick (Reynard FF84) 21m06.601s; 3 Jeremy Ellis; 4 Luke Dimsdale; 5 Adrian Argyros; 6 Paul Jepson. **FL** Ellis 1m40.062s (80.08mph).

RACE TWO (12 LAPS) 1 Ellis 20m22.502s (78.66mph); 2 Fletcher 20m24.342s; 3 Argyros; 4 Chris Sedgwick; 5 Darren Faraway; 6 Jepson. **FL** Fletcher 1m40.412s (79.80mph).

OPAL TELECOM NWFF1600 PRE-'87 (13 LAPS) 1 David Franklin (Reynard FF89) 20m55.929s (82.94mph); 2 Andrew Meyrick (Reynard FF84) 21m06.731s; 3 David Ashton (Reynard FF89); 4 Robert Wyke (Reynard FF89). **CW** Meyrick. **FL** John Loebell (Reynard FF88) 1m33.740s (85.48mph).

ALFA ROMEO (12 LAPS) 1 Andy Page (Giulietta Turbo) 21m08.803s (75.79mph); 2 Roger Evans (GTV) 21m17.818s; 3 Anthony George (33); 4 Le Penn (33). **CW** George; Evans; Chris Finch (156); Penn. **FL** Page 1m43.957s (77.08mph).



Will Gollop gave his local fans something to cheer at Lydden

TIM WHITTINGTON



Keith White (38) and Shane Brereton (48) battle at Oulton

RACHEL BOURNE

LYDDEN HILL
RALLYCROSS

March 28

GOLLOP BOOSTED BY
FIRST-ROUND GLORY

LYDDEN HERO Will

Gollop rattled off victory in the opening round of the MSA

British Rallycross Championship, fending off John McCluskey's challenge until a puncture put the latter's Citroën Xsara into a spin and retirement.

Lawrence Gibson was third and hounded in the first couple of laps by Andy Grant, Pat Doran, George Tracey and Dermot Carnegie, who had been higher but slipped down the order after a third-lap off.

McCluskey's exit was the cue for the order to be stirred again in the last couple of laps. Doran held third until fuel surge hindered his progress – Carnegie and Tracey swept by. But all of this was of no concern to Gibson, who was in a safe second, or Gollop, who cruised through the last two laps.

Fastest time of the day in the third heat transformed Gollop's day and allowed the local driver to claim pole for the Supercar A Final.

The day had started less well when suspect oil pressure, traced to a faulty sensor, led to retirement in the first heat. Gollop then hounded Gibson through the second heat, the Ulsterman using a freshly-watered track to his advantage as he set fastest time in the heat. That was enough for him to start between Gollop and McCluskey on the front of the grid.

Champion Carnegie started fourth, his revamped Focus almost like a new car and presenting its driver with one or two difficulties. Steve Mundy claimed to have no more than put some paint on his

car, but he had a great day. Fastest in the first heat and fifth in the second, he started in the middle of the A Final ahead of George Tracey, Pat Doran and Andy Grant. The latter had tipped Kevin McCann out of the main event despite retiring from the third heat with a puncture.

Gordon Rogers was top qualifier in the K&N Filters SuperModified category but he could do nothing about Dave Bellerby's fast-starting Lotus Elise. Julian Godfrey got the drop on the Yokohama Stock Hatch pack at the start of the A Final and never looked back. The Yokohama Junior A Final was taken by Kyle Orr, who led from the start and held off the spirited Ashley Simpson.

The BTRDA Junior Final was closer fought. Orr and Lewis Hopkins led before Andrew Jordan moved ahead and hung on to take a narrow victory from Orr. Green and Sellar improved on their placings in the British section with class wins in the BTRDA event.

■ by Tim Whittington

MSA BRITISH RALLYCROSS
CHAMPIONSHIP SUPERFINAL (5.5

LAPS) 1 Will Gollop (Ford Focus) 4m05.69s; 2 Lawrence Gibson (MG Metro 6R4) 4m08.42s; 3 Dermot Carnegie (Ford Focus) 4m11.62s; 4 George Tracey (Peugeot 306) 4m12.69s; 5 Pat Doran (Ford Fiesta) 4m13.76s; 6 Andy Grant (Ford Escort) 4m17.96s.

SUPERCAR A FINAL (4.5 LAPS) 1 Gollop 3m20.33s; 2 Gibson 3m21.91s; 3 Carnegie 3m22.44s.

SUPERMODIFIED A FINAL (4.5 LAPS) 1 Dave Bellerby (Lotus Elise) 3m30.69s; 2 Mike Sellar (Renault Clio Sport V6) 3m33.58s; 3 Des Wheatley (Rover Metro) 3m33.77s.

STOCK HATCH A FINAL (4.5 LAPS) 1 Julian Godfrey (Peugeot 205 GTi) 3m51.09s; 2 Rodney Green (Citroën Saxo VTR) 3m52.31s; 3 Don Shannon (Citroën Saxo VTR) 3m56.25s. **Junior (all Mini)** 1 Kyle Orr 4m11.70s; 2 Ashley Simpson 4m12.96s; 3 Lewis Hopkins 4m20.56s.

BTRDA CLUBMANS RALLYCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP A FINAL (4.5 LAPS) SuperModified 1 Sellar 3m46.85s; 2 Gary Dixon (Vauxhall Astra GTD) 3m48.64s; 3 Jonny Greer (Ford Puma S1600) 3m57.26s. **Stock Hatch** 1 Green 3m53.42s; 2 Steve Heppenstall (Peugeot 205 GTi) 4m01.06s; 3 Gary Johnston (Peugeot 205 GTi) 4m03.03s. **Junior** 1 Jordan 4m12.05s; 2 Orr 4m12.19s; 3 Simpson 4m12.54s.

NATIONAL



TEAM EUROTECH PORSCHE



MIKE JORDAN

AGE: 47
2004: 6TH IN BRITISH GT
CHAMPIONSHIP (2 WINS)



MICHAEL CAINE

AGE: 36
2004: INTERNATIONAL
OUTINGS IN SYNERGY TVR

THE TEAM

Mike Jordan's set-up is mostly unchanged, except for Michael Caine taking over from Mark Sumpter as co-driver. Caine lacks Porsche experience but nobody doubts that this friendly outfit will be quickly on the pace.

■ Is it going to be Porsche versus Ferrari in GT2 again this year?

MThe only other serious contenders are the TVRs. It's a very well-funded team with good engineers and drivers. They'll be strong competitors. Eclipse are new to the Mosler but the car has potential. The Ferrari will definitely be better at tracks such as Donington or Thruxton because of its weight distribution, but I think we [and the TVR] will enjoy places like Knockhill and Mondello with our traction off slow corners.

■ What's changed since last year for you?

Not a lot besides Caine joining. Personnel-wise it's the same, and we've just been doing detail work on the car during the winter. We've got a certain amount of stability there. Some teams are throwing huge sums of money into winning—so I hope Embassy don't win and we're the number one Porsche!

■ How do you feel about your own pairing?

Michael lacks a bit of experience in the car and he's had almost no dry testing. He's incredibly laid-back and quite a joker, but very serious in the car. He beat me in TVRs so I've got a healthy respect for him.

■ What do you think of the scrapping of penalties for 'professional' drivers?

I can see why they dropped it. I don't like penalties—it is supposed to be racing.

■ Do you think the two enduros will throw up some surprises?

Yes. That's where teams with endurance experience like ourselves might have an advantage.



LNT TVR T400R



WARREN HUGHES

AGE: 36
2004: LMES/FIAT GT WITH
SYNERGY AND GRUPPEM



PATRICK PEARCE

AGE: 23
2004: LMES PART-SEASON
WITH ROLL CENTRE RACING

THE TEAM

The TVRs are still something of an unknown quantity, but they may jostle the leaders from time to time. Jonny Kane and Lawrence Tomlinson will pilot the second car.

■ Is it going to be Porsche versus Ferrari in GT2 again this year?

WH Our main competition will be Scuderia Ecosse and the Porsches, but I'm sure we can mix it with them. The car was a little down on power in the Le Mans Endurance Series races last year, but it is reasonably competitive. We got among the Porsches and Ferraris at Spa. It's very strong in some areas like braking, but the main thing to develop this year is the engine.

■ What's changed since last year for you?

The car has changed a little but it has the same bare bones. The team is basically new, though. There are a lot of new faces and it's much bigger. Alan Mugglestone is now fully in charge. Things will improve very quickly—he is an excellent engineer.

■ How do you feel about your own pairing?

I don't know anything about Patrick, but Alan seems to rate him quite highly. I'd like to think we'll be the stronger pairing, but it's hard to say. It's going to be interesting.

■ What do you think of the scrapping of penalties for 'professional' drivers?

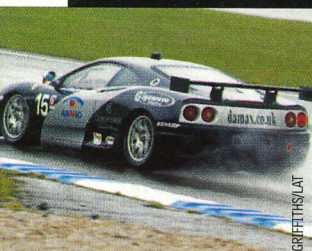
Last year's system wasn't especially fair. It penalised experience but had nothing to do with speed. It's a fairer system now—though the races might be more predictable!

■ Do you think the two enduros will throw up some surprises?

It will help well-prepared, reliable teams. And the hardware of the TVR traditionally isn't an issue.

CUP CLASS PREVIEW

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS



IN 2003 the GT3 class (née Cup class) for heavily production-based sportscars may have been introduced as something of a panic measure to ensure credible grids, but it is to the credit of series organisers that the class has grown in strength.

Porsche 911 squad Tech 9 Motorsport has claimed the teams' championship for the past two years, and would have taken last year's drivers' crown but for its line-up chopping and changing. A brace of Porsches from Team Parker Racing also

look strong, with the lead car driven by Martin Rich and Julian Westwood.

Jason Wilcox and Ni Amorin won the drivers' crown last year in a Ferrari with the now-defunct DRM Motorsport team, leaving marque specialist DAMAX as the likely challenger. The

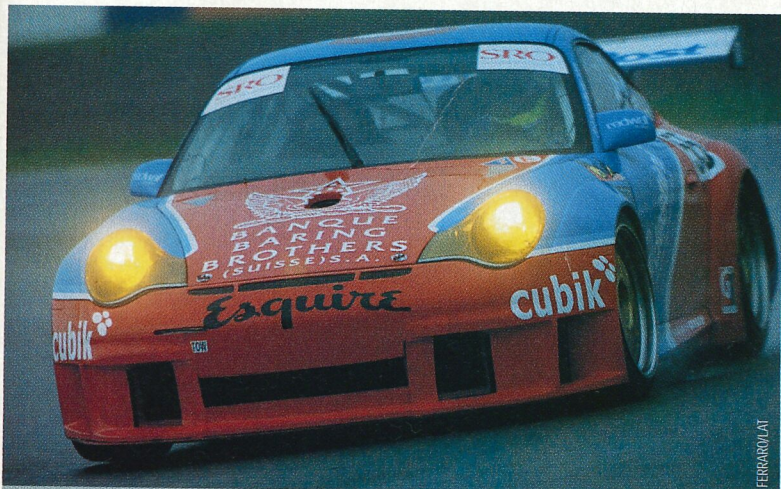
team has flitted in and out of the series but has taken class wins, including third outright at Silverstone last year. Experienced duo Robin Ward and Marco Attard will complement the rapid pairing of Jamie Smyth and Miles Hulford.

Class stalwart Team Aero

returns with its Morgan for team boss Keith Ahlers and youngster Oli Bryant, while there is new machinery in the form of a brace of BMW Z3 Coupés run by Bigfish Racing (Chris Wilson and Alistair Davidson) and Hawthorn Motorsport (Jan Persson and Rod Barrett).

LOTTERY

Trying to pick a winner from the main contenders in this year's British GT field is something of a gamble. By RICHARD ASHER



EMBASSY RACING PORSCHE



ECURIE ECOSSE FERRARI



NEIL CUNNINGHAM
AGE: 42
2004: 19TH IN BRITISH GT CHAMPIONSHIP



BEN COLLINS
AGE: 28
2004: RACE WINNER IN SCSA STOCK CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

■ Is it going to be Porsche versus Ferrari in GT2 again this year?

NC Definitely. The Porsche is a real turnkey race car. I wasn't sure the choice was right but after our Monza test last week I'm convinced. You don't need to keep re-engineering the car to make it go quicker. Both Ferraris will be quick—watch out for Niarchos and Mullen.

■ What's changed since last year for you?

NC Ben joins me as co-driver, which is good. Jonathan France has taken the whole operation in-house. He's very dynamic and loves his PR—we're lucky to have found a guy who wants to be another Ron Dennis or Frank Williams.

■ How do you feel about your own pairing?

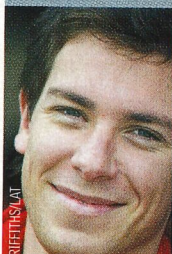
NC We always joke around a lot but still push each other in the right way. He's very good and fiery in traffic; one of the best drivers I've ever been paired with. Ben's strong and aggressive over one lap, whereas I'm more consistent over a long distance.

■ What do you think of the scrapping of penalties for 'professional' drivers?

NC Good idea. If a driver is slow then I think the thing to do is make him quicker. I'm quite surprised I've been classed as an amateur though!

■ Do you think the two enduros will throw up some surprises?

NC The smartest team will win at Donington, and maybe that can be ourselves. Magny-Cours is a fantastic track, but we won't have a chance against the FIA GT teams because of their straightline speed.



NATHAN KINCH
AGE: 22
2004: 3RD IN BRIT GT WITH SCUDERIA ECOSSE (5 WINS)



ANDREW KIRKALDY
AGE: 28
2004: 3RD IN BRIT GT WITH SCUDERIA ECOSSE (5 WINS)

■ Is it going to be Porsche versus Ferrari in GT2 again this year?

AK I wouldn't think so. The TVR cars have got pretty good drivers so they will be quick. The Moslers will be strong too. Mike Jordan is always fast, and the Embassy drivers should be fairly quick, but the team might take time to get used to the Porsche.

■ What's changed since last year for you?

AK The car is in 2005 spec and it feels a lot better. The team has new engineers, and the added input we'll be getting from builders Michelotto should make a difference. Chris Niarchos and Tim Mullen are in the same spec car, which will help us to compare data.

■ How do you feel about your own pairing?

AK It should be stronger. Nathan seems to have picked up this year where he left off last season. He has been very quick and was just a fraction off me when we tested at Magny-Cours.

■ What do you think of the scrapping of penalties for 'professional' drivers?

AK It's good—last year you got penalised for having a certain pairing regardless of whether it was successful or not. It's not a problem that they've kept success ballast, but I do think that Neil Cunningham should be classified as a professional!

■ Do you think the two enduros will throw up some surprises?

AK It should play into our hands. It will also help us for LMES and Le Mans. It's nice to see that variety—and the safety car won't be able to ruin the result!

THE TEAM

The championship's most colourful team has taken full charge of the operation from Xero Competition, and switched from a Corvette to a Porsche. Neil Cunningham gets pacy Ben Collins as his co-driver, so this should be a frontrunner.

THE TEAM

The most consistent rivals to the champion Porsche last year, Kinch and Kirkaldy are back again with an updated 360. Their team-mates Chris Niarchos and Tim Mullen now have an identical car and should fly.

FORMULA FORD UK PREVIEW

DONNELLY v D'AGOSTINO

IT'S BEEN a good old-fashioned sparse winter for Formula Ford UK. Signings have been few and far between, and some deals may only be done this week.

FFord remains on the F3/GT package, which earns it an offshore round at the Nürburgring LMES

weekend—though the series won't be racing at Spa. On the other hand, the Stéphane Ratel/Jonathan Palmer politics means that low-profile trips to Snetterton, Oulton Park and Brands Hatch will be made separately from the SRO circus.

At the time of writing, Joe d'Agostino and Charlie Donnelly looked the most likely title contenders. Donnelly will be back in Jamun's Mygale and will be keen to keep his pace up for the duration. After all, it is his third year in the series, ditto with Jamun. Duncan

Tappy partners him; he'll do well if the Winter Series is anything to go by.

D'Agostino also has stability in that he's sticking with Team JLR, but he'll be moving up into one of the latest Van Diemen chassis. He'll join BRDC Single-seater graduate Jonny

Baker and Norwegian Thor-Christian Ebbesvik.

Nexa Racing will not return, but ex-engineer Lindsay Allen will field cars under the Fluid Motorsport Developments banner. Carl-Olov Carlsson will race at Donington Park, with further outings possible.





BRAZILIAN GRAND PRIX 1993

In front of a crowd of thousands, home town hero Ayrton Senna takes the chequered flag after using a Brazilian downpour to his advantage

DIVINE INTERVENTION in the form of a tropical downpour helped Brazil's favourite son, Ayrton Senna, race his way to a legendary home triumph at Interlagos, and also helped McLaren to its 100th GP victory.

In qualifying, however, a home win looked impossible for Senna. Williams' Alain Prost effortlessly grabbed pole, almost a second ahead of team-mate Damon Hill, with the Brazilian back in third.

Prost roared away at the start, but Senna got the jump on Hill, who slipped to third.

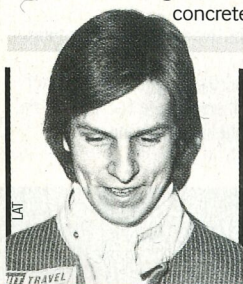
As the field streamed towards the first corner, all hell broke loose. Michael Andretti had made a poor start from the third row of the grid and Gerhard Berger's Ferrari made ground on the McLaren. The cars touched, skidded across the grass and crashed into a concrete wall.

Meanwhile, Prost had opened up a lead to Senna, with Hill retaking second on lap 11.

On lap 24 Senna pitted to serve a stop/go penalty imposed because he had overtaken under yellows while the accident wreckage at the start was cleared away. He rejoined in fourth place just as the heavens opened and dived back into the pits for wet tyres.

Confusion reigned as the tropical deluge raged. As cars spun off, Prost came across an accident, attempted to avoid some debris, aquaplaned and slid into Christian Fittipaldi's Minardi. His race was over.

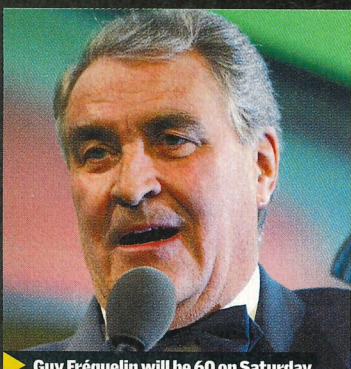
With Hill leading, the rain stopped, prompting a flurry of pitstops to switch tyres. The Brit pitted on lap 41, one after Senna. The Brazilian seized the moment and dived by, taking a lead he wouldn't relinquish, much to the delight of his home crowd. *Autosport*, April 1, 1993



BEFORE THEY WERE FAMOUS DAVID SEARS

NOW multiple F3000 champion team boss with Super Nova, a fresh-faced David Sears is pictured here savouring his success in the 1979 Ford 1600 series.

ANNIVERSARIES



Guy Fréquelin will be 60 on Saturday

MARCH 31
Kevin Cogan (b 1956)
Toni Gardemeister (b 1975)

APRIL 1
Alan Kulwicki (d 1993)

APRIL 2
Fabrizio Barbazza (b 1963)
Jack Brabham (b 1926)
Guy Fréquelin (b 1945)
Mike Hailwood (b 1940, d Mar 23 1981)
Will Hoy (b 1952,

d Dec 19 2002)
Juha Kankkunen (b 1959)
Nicolas Lapierre (b 1984)

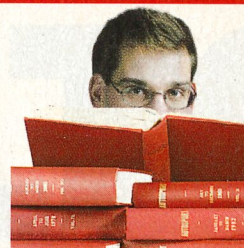
APRIL 3
Emmanuel Collard (b 1971)
Frank Dernie (b 1950)
Jari-Matti Latvala (b 1985)

APRIL 4
Richard Attwood (b 1940)
Roberto Colciago (b 1968)
Mark Skaife (b 1966)

Christian Danner (b 1958)

APRIL 5
Soheil Ayari (b 1970)
Ronnie Bucknum (b 1936)
Tom Coronel (b 1972)
Keith Odor (b 1962, d Sep 11 1995)
Alexandre Prémat (b 1975)

APRIL 6
Hermann Lang (b 1909, d Oct 19 1987)



AUTOSNORT

WE'RE NOT quite sure if it's deliberate, but it's still funny. Welcome to the madcap world of Marcus Grönholm. Here are some of the double world champ's best quotes.

Policeman: "You can't drive with that car."
Grönholm: "Oh yes, I can drive, if you will let me..."

Facing the long arm of the law with three wheels on his wagon, Rally GB 2004

"I'm fed up with this car!"
Landing himself in hot water with the management, after the 307 proved repeatedly troublesome in Mexico 2004

"The car slides too much, the road is too narrow and the ditches are too deep!"
An honest response to a question as to why he wasn't pushing Petter Solberg harder in Sweden 2005

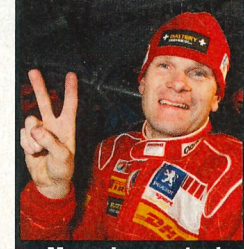
"Tell Corrado three's enough!"
A message back to team boss Corrado Provera after he set a quick time through the fearsome Ouninpohja stage on Rally Finland 2004 – without fourth gear

"You're driving like an old lady!"
To Petter Solberg after SS6 of Mexico. Didn't end that way

"Oh, sorry, sorry, sorry..."
Grönholm to his in-car camera after a volley of abuse following a mid-stage slip

"I picked up a Christmas tree!"
Arriving at service with some greenery on Rally Japan 2004

"I think I'll open a garage and change brakes for a living!"
After spending leg two of Rally Mexico 2005 changing his cooked brake pads



Marcus is guaranteed to raise a grin (or two)

The hairs on the back of your hairs will stand up.



The SEAT Leon Cupra R.

This is no car for the faint-hearted. As you gun the 1.8 20V T turbo engine and it discharges a 225PS power wave through the 6-speed transmission, you can take comfort in the fact that the only laws you might be breaking are Newton's. All Leon Cupra R owners receive a free track day to put a Leon Cupra R through its paces, as well as 2 SEAT Sport racing jackets and a VIP day at the BTCC as a guest of SEAT*.



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Fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions for Leon Cupra R, measured in accordance with EU Directive 99/94. Urban: 22.6mpg / 12.5 ltr per 100km, Extra urban: 42.8mpg / 6.6 ltr per 100km, Combined: 32.1mpg / 8.8 ltr per 100km, CO₂ : 211g/km.